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ABSTRACT

This report describes a "third wave" of educational reform that focuses on improving academic achievement and preventing dropping out among disadvantaged children. It contains eight sections. The Executive Summary surveys the dimensions of the at-risk situation and strategies to confront it. "The Scope of the Problem" provides background on the issue and describes what is at stake for society as a whole. "Who Are Youth at Risk?" defines the problem in terms of poverty, transience and homelessness, and single-parent families. This section also describes demographic changes and discusses the following problems related to at-risk students: (1) dropping out; (2) low academic achievement; (3) teenage parents; (4) emotional-physical health and related problems; (5) substance abuse; (6) youth unemployment; and (7) juvenile crime. "Research Related to Children at Risk" suggests the importance of parent involvement and early education. "Major Policy Statements" summarizes several papers issued recently by national organizations. In "Schools and the States Respond" the following responses to the problem are described: (1) school action; (2) local solutions; (3) state action; (4) a state action blueprint; and (5) results of a governors' report. In "Policy Implications for School Boards" the need for school restructuring is identified and 10 policy suggestions from experts on students at risk are highlighted. The final section is "A Call to Action." The report concludes with the following appendices: (1) descriptions of effective school programs; (2) descriptions of state programs; (3) an assessment instrument; and (4) a selected bibliography. Statistical data are presented on eight tables. (AF)

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An Equal Chance:

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Educating At-Risk Children to Succeed



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An Equal Chance:

**Educating At-Risk
Children to Succeed**

January 1989



FOREWORD

An equal chance. This is not a new concept in public education. School boards, administrators, and teachers traditionally have been concerned about access and equity issues. Families also have viewed public schools as the "great equalizer," offering opportunities for all children to learn, and to thereby increase their chances for success in life after their school years.

The public schools' role in providing that equal chance has changed significantly over the years. Programs tailored specifically to meet the needs of disadvantaged children began to take form in the 1960s with a recognition that student failure in school could not be attributed solely to lack of effort or ability. Despite the best efforts of the schools, however, the problems of "at-risk" children are a greater threat to our nation's economic, educational, and social well-being than in years past.

As illustrated in the following pages, the breadth of the at-risk youth population is alarming: 20% of America's children live below the poverty line; millions of students have limited English proficiency; more than half a million children are migrant and homeless; a million teenagers become pregnant each year—to cite only some of the more obvious indicators of risk.

Fortunately, much is known about what can

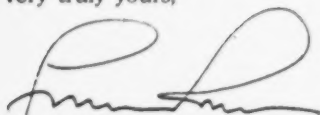
successfully ameliorate the risks of school failure and the consequent implications for today's youth. Unfortunately, the barriers to implementing those solutions in many instances are firmly entrenched within our traditional social institutions. The proper education of at-risk children will require breaking down those barriers. It will require new partnerships between public schools and business, health services agencies, social service deliverers, government, parents, and other community organizations.

It is to the public schools' credit that they continue to provide the traditional and necessary stepping stone into our societal mainstream. Many school districts are carving out of already strained budgets the money needed to implement creative at-risk youth programs. Other districts are still struggling to find what will work best in their communities.

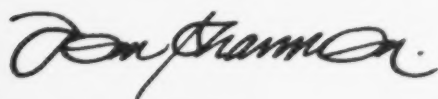
We hope this monograph will provide helpful guidance and assistance to school boards nationwide in identifying and serving America's children of disadvantage. The schools cannot—and should not—be expected to do the job alone. But they can—and must—provide the leadership.

An equal chance. By working together, that common goal can be achieved.

Very truly yours,



Leonard Rovins
President
National School Boards Association



Thomas A. Shannon
Executive Director
National School Boards Association

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the last several years, a host of reports and policy statements have urged schools to address the significant and growing problem of children at risk of school failure and, subsequently, of failing to become productive members of our society. Among the estimated 21 million children under age 18 considered to be at risk are the following: one million school dropouts each year, 1.5 million pregnant teenagers a year, a growing influx of students who have limited English proficiency, high school graduates with inadequate basic skills, and an increasing number of children abusing drugs, manifesting delinquent behaviors, and attempting or committing suicide.

The burgeoning set of problems associated with children at risk of school failure has many U.S. education, business, and government leaders increasingly concerned, because in the past generation, Americans' expectations for their schools, as well as business and industry's needs, have changed dramatically. Historically, the public schools have been a stepping stone into the economic mainstream. And once again, America's public schools are being summoned to concentrate their efforts to help lift children out of poverty and despair by giving them a solid academic background, basic skills needed for employment, assimilation into U.S. culture, and goals and a sense of purpose.

Scope of the Problem

Definitions of at-risk children vary, and some are quite vague. Although a popular perception is that at-risk children are found almost exclusively in inner-city schools in poor neighborhoods, this is not so; as many as three-fifths may be dispersed throughout the country in rural and suburban areas. Although at-risk children can't be categorized easily, many researchers agree that problems associated with school failure often are found among children who are poor and/or a member of a minority group.

Demographic figures disturbingly illustrate the breadth of the at-risk student population. Children and youth represent 40 percent of the nation's poor; between one-fifth and one-quarter of all U.S. children are poor. The school-age immigrant (non-native U.S. resident) population, estimated at between 2.2 million and 2.5 million youth, is expanding rapidly. Nearly 2.7 million students ages five to 14 are estimated to have limited English proficiency; only one-third are receiving special help in school. Nearly half a million elementary and secondary students in the U.S. are migrants (itinerant workers or the children of itinerant workers,

such as farm workers); the dropout rate for these students is between 45 and 90 percent.

Studies by numerous researchers have shown that children from single-parent families do worse in school, are more likely to drop out, and are more likely to become teen parents. Specifically, a University of Wisconsin researcher found that living in a mother-only family decreased the likelihood of completing high school by 5 percent for white children and 13 percent for black children. And Rand Corporation studies have shown that coming from a single-parent family is one of the most important factors determining whether a teenager will become pregnant out of wedlock. One in every six white children lives in a single-parent home, and more than half of all black children live with just one parent.

Different Problems Need Different Solutions

Studies on the causes of students dropping out — by far the largest body of research connected to the issue of children at risk — suggest that successful strategies for dropout prevention and recovery require:

- different programs designed for different types of dropouts or potential dropouts
- an appropriate mix of educational and noneducational services in each program
- accurate and timely identification of students with a high risk of dropping out
- programs designed for early prevention, late prevention, and recovery.

What Works?

As economic, government, health, and education policymakers focus their attention on the problems of children at risk, it becomes increasingly clear that lasting solutions must be found in cooperative efforts among all of these groups. School districts have by no means been idle in addressing these problems; many have vigorously pursued and implemented programs specifically targeted at children at risk of school failure.

According to research, policy reports, and successful school district programs (highlighted in the monograph), components in effective programs include:

- small class size and tutoring
- instructional styles that are appropriate to the particular group of students
- counseling programs
- alternative programs/settings
- employment skills training

- active parent involvement in school experience
- specially trained and empowered staff
- flexible schedules
- assistance from the community
- special services (examples: health clinics, job placement services).

Where to Begin in Your Own District

Providing services for children at risk will take creative fundraising or budget maneuvering by school districts, as well as the financial involvement of business, state and federal governments and other community organizations and local government offices. However, school officials need not wait to take action; they can begin immediately to assess methods they can use to ensure that all children can achieve. Here are some steps:

- Establish a policy that commits the schools to helping all children learn. Once such a policy is in place, begin to look at specific aspects of the school program (the need for special counseling or tutoring programs, for example) and indicators of school success or failure (improvements or worsening of dropout rate, grade retention rates, standardized test scores, parent involvement, and so on).
- Examine the needs of the community. Ask questions such as whether parents need day care services, health services, job skills training. Would parents be willing to volunteer to work in and with the schools?
- Develop a demographic profile of the school system — including the number of families in poverty, number of single-parent families, number of

migrant families, number of immigrant families. Communicate the profile to all individuals in the school system and use it in making decisions that affect students.

- Define and identify youth at risk. Develop a definition of youth at risk that is pertinent for your school population. Include such characteristics as absenteeism, chemical dependency, poor grades, low math and reading scores, failure in one or more grades, limited extracurricular participation, lack of identification with school, disruptive behavior, boredom with school, rebellious attitudes, verbal and language deficiencies, physical or emotional or learning disabilities, pregnancy, poverty, family mobility.
- Track identified students' progress in school through a comprehensive record-keeping system in which administrators, teachers, and counselors may document changes in a student's academic performance and behavior and assess the effectiveness of intervention strategies.
- Evaluate programs implemented. Identify successful strategies and revise programs accordingly.
- Give administrators and teachers flexibility in helping students at risk. Encourage school staffs to take the lead in identifying students and in developing their own programs to help through efforts such as "adopt-a-student" mentor and advisor programs, teacher teams that develop close ties with small groups of students, and tutoring programs involving other students, parents, and volunteers from the community and local businesses.
- Involve parents in their children's schooling.
- Work with local businesses, agencies, and organizations to help develop and fund programs.

THE SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM

Introduction

With the school reform movement well under way, the nation's educators, school officials, and legislators have begun to focus on the "third wave" of reform — improving academic achievement and preventing dropout among disadvantaged children. Although efforts to make school programs more rigorous and improve teaching, the focuses of the first two waves of reform, have helped raise standards, they also have made all the more apparent the plight of students at the lower end of the achievement spectrum. Many educators agree that these reforms have had the unintended result of leaving further behind the students most in need of help in meeting higher standards: children who because of a variety of factors are at the greatest risk of failing in school and, subsequently, of failing to become productive members of society.

In the past several years, a host of reports and policy statements have urged schools to address the significant and growing problem of "at risk" children. Nearly one-third of the nation's youth — 21 million children under age 18 — are considered at risk of school failure, according to various indices.

This estimation is especially alarming in light of the facts that: 1) The number of children considered at risk of school failure is increasing; 2) educators believe that new strategies — or new combinations of proven strategies — are needed to help at-risk children achieve in school; 3) the ramifications of not identifying and helping at-risk children spell serious problems for individual students, schools, and the nation.

The problems related to school failure — manifested in poor grades and pre-employment skills, lack of academic motivation, and factors such as pregnancy that interfere with graduating from high school — are suggested by the following:

- 1 million school dropouts a year
- 1.5 million teenage pregnancies a year
- a sizeable, chronic gap in school achievement between white students and minority students
- a growing influx of students who have limited English proficiency
- inadequate basic skills, even among high school graduates, leading to high levels of unemployment and low-skill jobs
- health and social problems, some related to low self-esteem, such as substance abuse, delinquency, and teen suicide.

Background on the Issue

To some extent, these problems have been with the schools for many years. Certainly, poor children always have had trouble finishing school, teenagers have gotten pregnant, immigrant children have had to struggle to learn English, and achievement gaps have existed along racial and socioeconomic lines because of, for one, unequal distribution of school resources.

"Educationally disadvantaged students have been present in the schools since the origins of public schooling in the U.S. in the middle of the 19th century," notes Henry M. Levin, an educational economist, in *The Educationally Disadvantaged: A National Crisis*, a report published in 1985 by Public/Private Ventures, a Philadelphia-based nonprofit corporation involved in job training and educational programs for disadvantaged youth.

The role of schools in helping disadvantaged children has changed markedly since then, says Levin. Still, it was not until the 1960s, he says, "that the schools began explicitly to recognize that such students had to be provided with tailored educational programs if they were to succeed. Up to that point, the blame for educational failure of students fell on the students and their families, with schools taking little or no responsibility. It was assumed that schools were available to all, and that those who did not succeed educationally were limited in either their abilities or efforts or both."

By the mid-1960s, state and federal governments had established compensatory education programs for disadvantaged children, says Levin, and local school systems were attempting to adapt instructional strategies to meet the needs of these students. Some of the programs were successful, but a major shortcoming was inadequate funding. The Title I (now called Chapter I) program, the largest federal aid program, for example, typically represented appropriations equal to only about 3 percent of the total U.S. elementary and secondary school expenditures.

Two recent trends that suggest that the situation will deteriorate further, says Levin, are 1) the disadvantaged student population is growing at a far more rapid rate than that of the rest of the population; and 2) the number of poor children in all racial groups is increasing.

The burgeoning set of problems associated with children at risk of school failure has many U.S. education, business, and government leaders increasingly concerned because in the past generation, Americans' expectations for their schools, and business and industry's needs, have changed dramatically.

For example, although U.S. schools graduate a larger portion of the school-age population than ever before — the school dropout rate was 90 percent around the

turn of the century and 50 percent as late as the 1950s, compared to 25 percent today — the background and skills needed for employment also are greater than ever. A 25 percent dropout rate, though an improvement over a generation ago, appears appalling, for instance, when compared to Japan's virtually nonexistent one, despite various well-intended arguments designed to point out the differences between the cultures and their approach to schooling.

The evolution in which the schools have assumed ever-increasing responsibility has come about, according to researchers, as a result, among other factors, of the breakdown of the family; an increase in the proportion of poor families; and a traditional perception that the schools, the only social institution that reaches all children, can provide the way out of disadvantage. Indeed, more than any other institution in U.S. society, the schools have been able to help lift children out of poverty and despair by giving them a solid academic background, basic skills needed for employment, assimilation into U.S. culture, and goals and a sense of purpose. And this is why the schools in particular now are being summoned to concentrate their efforts on helping children considered at risk of school failure.

What is at Stake

Failing to finish school is an altogether riskier proposition now than in years past. Teenagers who leave school before graduation no longer can count on making a decent living as factory workers, farmers, or laborers. To compete in the U.S. and worldwide markets, manufacturing, service, and information industries now demand more sophisticated skills of job holders. Workers must be literate, have good problem-solving skills, and be capable of applying new technologies.

The nation's business leaders have expressed concern that students who drop out, and even many who complete high school, come to jobs without many of the basic skills they need to do well, and they have warned that an inadequately prepared work force threatens the nation's economic stability and ability to continue as a democratic, informed society.

The nation's need for a better educated work force is critical now, say U.S. business leaders, because the impact of new technologies is creating the need for more workers — an estimated 156 million jobs in the private sector by 1990, or nearly twice the number needed in 1978, according to *Children in Need*, a 1987 report from the Committee for Economic Development.

This and other demographic projections suggest that the U.S. will be hard-pressed to meet the demand for highly qualified workers. The Educational Research Service reports that the number of high school graduates will continue to decline for the next eight years, resulting in a 20 percent drop in the number of

graduates between 1980 and 1995. As the need for skilled workers increases, then, the number of qualified graduates is expected to decrease. According to *Children in Need*, the United States may have a shortage of 23 million workers by 1990.

The costs of an inadequately educated and motivated work force are high in other ways. Estimates on the costs of dropping out range from \$20,000 to \$200,000 for individuals in lifetime earnings. The national cost of dropout for the high school class of 1981 is estimated at \$238 billion in lifetime earnings and \$68 billion in lost tax revenues, according to "On the Social Costs of Dropping Out," a 1985 report from the Center for Educational Research at Stanford University.

Improving education so that all children eventually will be able to support themselves adequately and contribute to a strong economy is a costly proposition. But researchers say such efforts are cost-effective. For example, according to a report from the Select Committee on Children, Youth, and Families, U.S. House of Representatives, every dollar spent on high-quality preschool programs for disadvantaged children saves society as much as \$4.75 because of lower costs of special education, public assistance, and crime.

While much of the discussion about the need to improve education for students at risk of school failure has focused on the national economic imperative, there are, of course, other equally compelling reasons. First among them is the issue of equity: that every child should be given an equal chance to succeed in school and in life. Actions such as court-ordered busing in the 1960s and 1970s to reduce the discriminatory effects of racial isolation, Title I (now Chapter I) federal financial

The nation's need for a better educated work force is critical now, say U.S. business leaders, because the impact of new technologies is creating the need for more workers — an estimated 156 million jobs in the private sector by 1990, or nearly twice the number needed in 1978.

aid for districts with high concentrations of poor students, and the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, which increased civil rights and school financial support for children with disabilities, have helped further the cause of equity.

The National School Boards Association notes, however, that federal funding for such efforts has lagged in recent years. NSBA has called on the federal government to take a larger role in advancing equal educational opportunity by, for example, fully funding special needs programs established at the federal level and concentrating research and policy efforts on goals which benefit all students. The states also are addressing the equity issue in the distribution of state

aid to respond to differences in the wealth of districts. For example, Vermont, one of ten or so states undertaking school finance reforms, in 1987 recast its school finance plan to provide greater equity between the poorer rural districts and the wealthier resort districts, according to *Results in Education: 1988*, a report from the National Governors' Association. The thrust of school finance reform and new state funds, says the report, has focused on providing access-to-adequate-education plans, emphasizing concern for student performance, and supporting targeted populations, such as at-risk students.

Together with a reordering of education priorities at the state and federal levels, schools are being asked to address the equity issue. In light of a considerable, well-respected, and expanding body of research on effective schools that shows that all children can learn, schools no longer can assume that some children are destined

for failure, say many education leaders. The social justice quotient of helping at-risk kids is becoming a strong unifier in the education community and a rallying cry for lawmakers. In many cases, children who most could benefit from special academic programs, smaller class size, enrichment programs and activities, and better qualified teachers attend schools that have few resources and offer scant chances of breaking out of the cycle of poverty and undereducation.

This monograph will look at the various problems associated with at-risk children and how the schools can help these children succeed and become productive members of society. It will examine a number of the factors contributing to school failure, and it will suggest by way of research, policy recommendations, and school district examples how local school officials can help students in their own communities. ■

WHO ARE YOUTH AT RISK?

Definition of the Problem

Definitions of at-risk children vary, and some are quite vague. In *The Educationally Disadvantaged*, author Levin supplies a reasonably simple and inclusive definition for at-risk, or as he prefers to use, "educationally disadvantaged," children: those who "lack the home and community resources to benefit from conventional schooling practices. Because of poverty, cultural obstacles, or linguistic differences, these children tend to have low academic achievement and high dropout rates. Such students are heavily concentrated among minority groups, immigrants, nonEnglish-speaking families, and economically disadvantaged populations."

A broad range of factors may contribute to at-risk status. *Children in Need* notes that children may fail for a variety of reasons: "They may come to school poorly prepared for classroom learning or not yet ready developmentally for formal education. Their parents may be indifferent to their educational needs. They may be the children of teenagers who are ill equipped for parenting. They may have undiagnosed learning disabilities, emotional problems, or physical handicaps. They may have language problems or come from nonEnglish-speaking homes. They may experience racial or ethnic prejudice. They may have access only to schools of substandard quality."

Although a popular perception is that at-risk children are found almost exclusively in inner-city schools in poor neighborhoods, this is not so; approximately 40 percent of at-risk children live in the inner city, and 60 percent are dispersed throughout the country in rural and suburban areas, according to *Children in Need*.

At-risk children can't be categorized easily, though many researchers agree that problems associated with school failure often are found among children who are poor and/or a member of a minority group. Demographic figures are telling.

Poverty

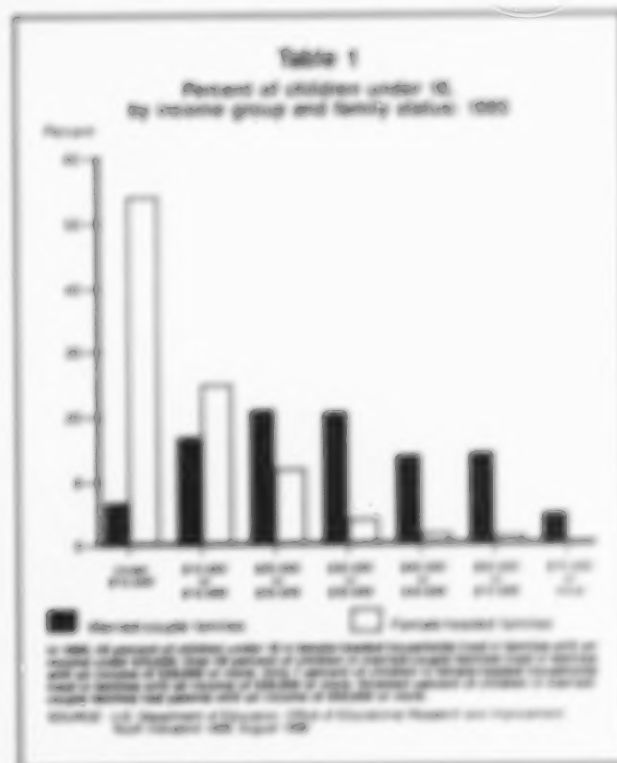
Children and youth comprise a quarter of the U.S. population, but they represent 40 percent of the nation's poor. Between one-fifth and one-quarter of all U.S. children are poor, according to varying estimates.

A March 1987 report of the U.S. House of Representatives Select Committee on Children, Youth, and Families, for example, says that 20.1 percent of all children under age 18 live below the poverty line (income average: \$10,903 for a family of four). Some 25 percent of children under age six are living in poverty. The report, based on data through 1985 from the U.S. Census Bureau, shows that 15.6 percent of poor children were white, 43.1 percent were black, and 39.6 percent were Hispanic.

Transience/Homelessness

A growing number of children from families suffering from poverty and unemployment (or seasonal employment) do not attend school regularly because they have no fixed home. A September 1988 report to Congress by a panel of the National Academy of Sciences estimated that at least 100,000 children were homeless on any given night in the United States. According to a September 1988 article in *Education Week*, New York State has an estimated 15,000 to 20,000 homeless children; it is the only state so far to alter residency requirements to allow the parents of homeless children to select a school district. The state also is providing aid to districts that take in homeless children.

Over 500,000 elementary and secondary students in the U.S. are migrants, according to the National Migrant Dropout Youth Clearinghouse in Geneseo, NY. The dropout rate among migrant youth until last year was believed to be between 80 and 90 percent, according to a recent study, "Migrant Attention Project: Abstract of Findings, August 1987," the dropout rate has declined to 45 percent. Some authorities on migrant education believe the dropout rate is somewhere in between the 45 and 90 percent rates.



Single-parent Families

The poorest children are those who live with their single mothers. More than half (53.6 percent) of all poor children live in single-parent households headed by women, according to the congressional Select Committee report. While nearly half of all poor white children in 1985 lived with their single mothers, the figures are even higher for black and Hispanic children — 66.9 percent and 72.4 percent, respectively.

One in every six white children lives in a single-parent home, but more than half of all black children live with just one parent. Poor children from single-parent households are more likely to have been born to teenage mothers, and are more likely to become teen parents themselves. Three-quarters of all black children born in 1986 were born to unwed mothers, half of them to teenagers.

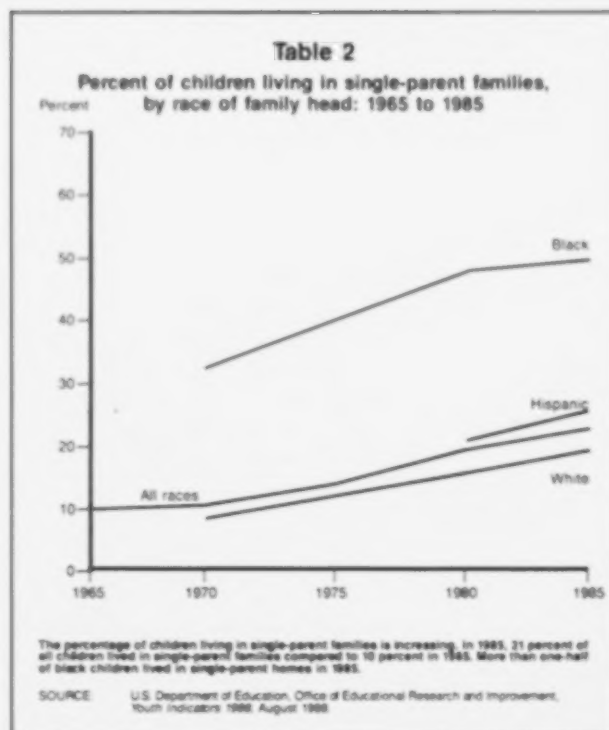
Studies have shown that children from single-parent families tend to do worse in school than those living in two-parent homes. "The biggest difference in the performance of schoolchildren appears in teacher evaluations — such as grade point averages and behavior assessments — both of which show substantially lower scores for children from one-parent families," conclude Irwin Garfinkel and Sara S. McLanahan of the Institute for Research on Poverty, University of Wisconsin-Madison in their 1986 book, *Single Mothers and Their Children: A New American Dilemma*. Research has shown that children from one-parent families scored lower on quantitative as well as verbal tests, although the differences were less than a year, say Irwin and McLanahan. Living in a mother-only family decreased the likelihood of completing high school by about 5 percentage points for white children and 13 percentage points for black children, according to a study conducted by McLanahan.

Coming from a single-parent family "is on the short list of variables consistently associated with placing kids at risk," says Peter Morrison, principal investigator in a Rand Corporation study, "Beyond Stereotypes: Who Becomes a Single Teenage Mother?" The study found that being in a single-parent family was one of several very important factors that increased the odds of teenage pregnancy.

Demographic Changes

In 1960, children under age 18 comprised a third of the total U.S. population. In 1985, they comprised a quarter. But while the number of children has declined, the percentages of poor children and minority children both have been rising steadily and are expected to increase through the end of the century.

In 1985, minorities comprised 17 percent of the total U.S. population. By the year 2020, according to one projection, the percentage of minorities is expected to increase to more than a third of the population. If



current demographic trends continue, a larger proportion of this group will be disadvantaged children.

Since the 1960s, the majority of U.S. immigrants have come from Asia, Hispanic countries, and the Caribbean. The school-age immigrant population is estimated at between 2.2 million and 2.5 million youth (ages five to 19). Some states have more immigrant students than others. California, for instance, has a quarter of foreign-born U.S. residents. And more than half of all Hispanic immigrants have settled in California and Texas.

As the number of immigrants increases, the demand on schools for bilingual or English-as-a-second-language courses rises. In some school systems, more than 100 languages are spoken. Only approximately one-third of the 2.7 million students ages five to 14 estimated to have limited English proficiency are receiving special help in school.

Problems Related to At-Risk Kids

Not every child from a disadvantaged, immigrant, and/or minority family has problems doing well in and graduating from school. To the contrary, most educators are familiar with local success stories of children who excelled, went on for further education, and became distinguished leaders.

In some schools (for example, those profiled in the U.S. Department of Education's *Schools that Work*, which is discussed in the next chapter), a combination of high expectations and standards, strong school leadership, help from caring adults, and involvement of

Table 3
State Dropout Rates 1985

STATE	DROPOUT RATE	STATE	DROPOUT RATE
U.S.		MISSOURI	24%
ALABAMA	33%	MONTANA	17%
ALASKA	22%	NEBRASKA	16%
ARIZONA	32%	NEVADA	25%
ARKANSAS	24%	NEW HAMPSHIRE	23%
CALIFORNIA	25%	NEW JERSEY	17%
COLORADO	21%	NEW MEXICO	29%
CONNECTICUT	22%	NEW YORK	33%
DELAWARE	11%	NORTH CAROLINA	31%
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA	42%	NORTH DAKOTA	5%
FLORIDA	35%	OHIO	18%
GEORGIA	34%	OKLAHOMA	20%
HAWAII	18%	OREGON	27%
IDAHO	22%	PENNSYLVANIA	20%
ILLINOIS	23%	RHODE ISLAND	25%
INDIANA	22%	SOUTH CAROLINA	34%
IOWA	12%	SOUTH DAKOTA	15%
KANSAS	17%	TENNESSEE	35%
KENTUCKY	32%	TEXAS	31%
LOUISIANA	43%	UTAH	15%
MAINE	23%	VERMONT	15%
MARYLAND	19%	VIRGINIA	24%
MASSACHUSETTS	23%	WASHINGTON	25%
MICHIGAN	28%	WEST VIRGINIA	23%
MINNESOTA	9%	WISCONSIN	16%
MISSISSIPPI	35%	WYOMING	18%

Education Commission of the States, Denver, Co.

SOURCE: Public Schools USA, A Comparative Guide to School Districts, 1988

parents has created an environment where kids who otherwise would be candidates for school failure have flourished academically and socially.

Such schools are models. Far more common are schools which, despite the best intentions, must address some or all of the manifestations of school failure.

Dropout

The New York City schools made headlines in the *New York Times* with the release of a Board of Education report indicating that 55 percent of students who began high school in 1982 failed to graduate in 1986.

Estimates on the number of dropouts in the U.S. (and at state and local levels) vary because definitions of dropouts vary, and because there is no nationwide standard for computing dropout rates. But for the purposes of trying to illustrate the scope of the problem, here are some more commonly used figures:

In 1985, there were approximately 4.3 million dropouts age 16-24, of whom some 3.5 million were white, 700,000 were black, and 100,000 were members of other races, according to *School Dropouts: The Extent and Nature of the Problem*, a 1986 report by the General Accounting Office (GAO). The report, based on data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' Current Population Survey, shows that 14 percent of youth age 18-19 were dropouts (16 percent male, 12 percent female), and that the dropout rate had held

steady at 13 to 14 percent since 1975.

The GAO report also notes, however, that data compiled by school districts show much higher dropout rates for inner-city public schools, including rates of more than 50 percent.

High School and Beyond, an ongoing study by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), U.S. Department of Education, estimates that 14 percent of the 1980 high school sophomores dropped out before graduation. The data shows 13 percent of white students, 17 percent of black students, and 19 percent of Hispanic students in the 1980 class dropped out.

Another NCES report, however, suggests a bigger problem. More than 25 percent of the nation's 18- and 19-year-old population had not graduated from high school in 1985 according to *Condition of Education, 1987*.

A 1987 report by Congress's Select Committee on Children, Youth, and Families indicates that, in 1985, 74 percent of U.S. 18-year-olds were graduated from high school — compared to 72 percent in 1980. Since 1960, between 70 and 75 percent of high school seniors have graduated each year, with the ratio slightly higher for females, according to figures based on U.S. Census Bureau data.

Although figures from these various sources don't agree, says Samuel S. Peng in "High School Dropouts: A National Concern," a 1985 report prepared for the Education Commission of the States, "they all indicate the dropout phenomenon is widespread." In recent years, says Peng, "more than one of four students leaves school without graduating."

The problem is more severe for some segments of the population than others. For example, the National Commission of Secondary Education for Hispanics estimates that 45 percent of Hispanic high school students in the U.S. drop out before graduation. This rate is more than double the rate for blacks and three times the rate for whites. Moreover, 40 percent of Hispanic students never reach tenth grade.

The *High School and Beyond* data shows that students from the lowest quartile of socioeconomic status were three times more likely (17 percent) to drop out than students of the highest SES quartile (5 percent).

Low Academic Achievement

Poor grades was the top reason cited in the *High School and Beyond* study for dropping out of school. According to the GAO report, students were more likely to drop out when they were two or more years behind grade level.

According to NCES statistics from 1984, mathematics test scores for a national sample of students ages nine, 13, and 17 that were compared by race showed that white students had higher scores at all age levels than blacks and Hispanics, and that the test gap was greater at age 17 than at nine.

Teenage Parents

According to a 1986 national poll conducted by Louis Harris and Associates, 57 percent of 17-year-olds have had sexual intercourse. Many of those sexually active teens become pregnant. Approximately 65 percent of school administrators view teen pregnancy as one of the top ten problems facing their school districts, and 22 percent said it is among their top five problems, according to a survey conducted for *Teen Pregnancy: Impact on the Schools*, a 1987 report by the Education Research Group.

The teen pregnancy rate in the U.S. is one of the highest in the western world. U.S. teens under age 15 are at least 15 times more likely to give birth than their peers in other Western nations. Some researchers believe the teen pregnancy rate has leveled off and might even be on the decline after a marked increase during the 1970s. But more than 1 million teens now become pregnant each year, with an estimated 470,000 teens giving birth, the majority of whom are unmarried.

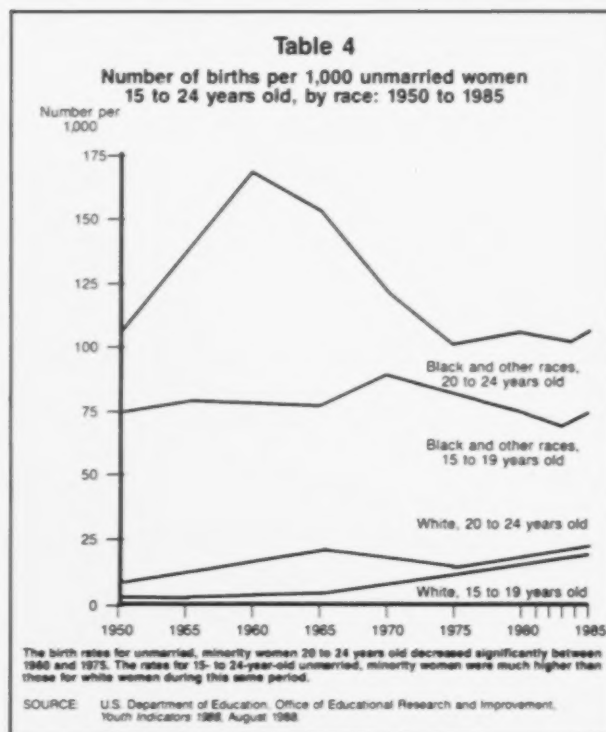
According to the Alan Guttmacher Institute, a family planning research organization in Washington, D.C., the pregnancy and birth rates for nonwhite teens were twice those for white teens. Teen parents are more likely than others to have low-paying, low-status jobs; and the younger the mother at childbirth, the lower her annual income, says the Institute. In 1985, the federal government spent \$16.6 billion for cash assistance, food stamps, and medical care for women who first gave birth as teens.

Emotional/Physical Health and Related Problems

Many children at risk of failure have physical or emotional handicaps which either of themselves or combined with other factors cause problems in school. According to the Council for Exceptional Children, approximately 4.4 million youth ages birth to 21 in 1985-86 received special services in the schools, and about 11 percent of the total school-age population are considered handicapped (the definition includes 11 disabilities, such as learning disabled, emotionally disturbed, orthopedically handicapped, deaf-blind, and so on).

More than 1,900,000 cases of child abuse and neglect were reported in 1986, according to the Children's Defense Fund, a child advocacy group based in Washington. This number represents an increase of 50 percent over the previous five years. Child abuse and neglect has been shown to occur more frequently in poor families.

The rate of suicide among teens age 15 to 19 has more than doubled since 1960, according to the congressional report. In 1984, 1,692 youths in this age group took their lives. Suicide rates among white males were more than twice the rate for black males, approximately four times higher than white females, and about nine times higher than black females. Although



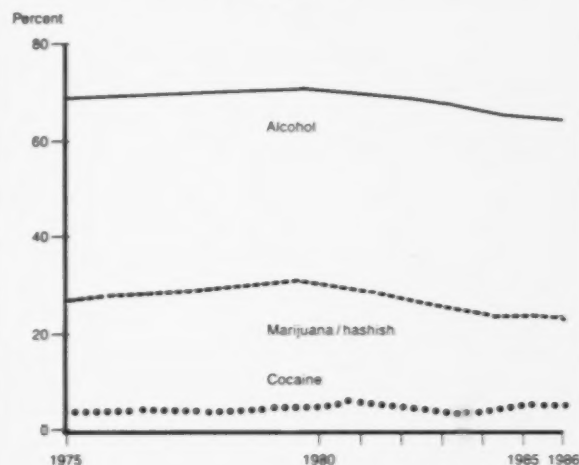
the number of suicides among youth age 15 to 19 declined from a peak in 1980, the number of suicides among younger youths, age 12 to 14, rose steadily during that period from 130 to 205.

Poor children are roughly twice as likely to have a major health problem that limits their school attendance, according to Congress's *U.S. Children and Their Families: Current Conditions and Recent Trends, 1987*. In addition, major health problems are more common among black children than white children.

Improper nutrition is one of the most common reasons children can't perform in school. To combat hunger and poor nutrition, the federal government in fiscal year 1987 spent \$3.3 billion on its school lunch program, which served 24 million children, including 11.7 million children from low and moderate-income families, according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, an independent nonprofit group in Washington. The government also in 1987 spent \$454 million on a school breakfast program for 3.7 million children, 3.1 million of whom were poor. The school lunch program is available in 87 percent of all U.S. schools, and 59 percent of the students in those schools receive lunches subsidized to a greater or lesser degree, says the Center. Many child advocates say, however, that the meal programs are inadequate to feed all the children who aren't properly fed at home.

Children don't have to be poor or minority, of course, to have health problems that interfere with school success. Along with the threat of pregnancy, sexual activity among adolescents can mean serious, even fatal,

Table 5
Percent of high school seniors who reported having used alcohol or drugs in the past 30 days, by substance: 1975 to 1986



The percentage of students who reported having ever used illicit drugs increased from 1975 to 1980 (see table). After 1980, student use of alcohol and marijuana / hashish declined. In 1985, more than one-fourth of high school seniors reported using marijuana / hashish in the past 30 days.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, Youth Indicators 1988, August 1988.

health problems. The rate of sexually transmitted disease (STD) among teens has never been higher; 2.5 million teenagers were affected by STDs in 1987, according to the federal Centers for Disease Control. Diseases such as gonorrhea, syphilis, chlamydia, and herpes can cause chronic problems, including painful sores, blindness, sterility, and unsightly skin conditions.

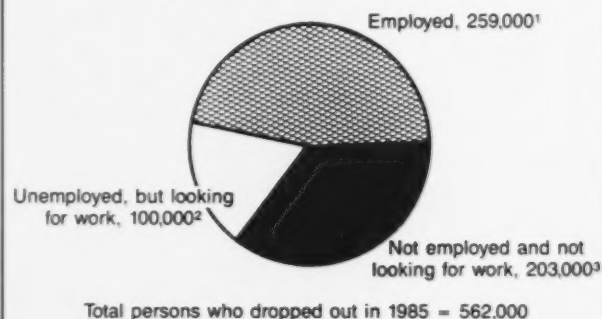
A far graver threat is the epidemic of infection with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). Although few cases of AIDS, the final stage of HIV infection, have been reported among adolescents — an estimated 1/2 percent of the more than 78,000 total, most of them among hemophiliacs, were diagnosed as of November 1988, according to the federal Centers for Disease Control — medical experts caution that adolescents are at high risk of becoming infected through sexual intercourse or intravenous drug use. In a recent article in the *New York Times*, medical experts noted that HIV infection was spreading among adolescents, and that because of the long lag time between infection and the onset of symptoms of AIDS, many adolescents may become infected and not be aware of it until they reach their twenties. As of November 1988, 21 percent of AIDS cases in the U.S. were among people in their twenties.

Substance Abuse

Substance abuse continues to impair many students' ability to achieve in school. According to *U.S. Children and Their Families: Current Conditions and Recent Trends, 1987*, alcohol and drug use among high school seniors declined steadily from the peak year of 1979 through 1985. Still, in 1985 some 66 percent of students reported drinking (compared to 72 percent in 1979), and 26 percent reported using marijuana (compared to 36 percent in 1979). Cocaine use, reported by some 7 percent of seniors in 1985, has continued to rise, however. According to a national survey of high school seniors conducted annually by the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research, the number of high school seniors in the Class of 1986 reporting "active use" (use within 30 days prior to being polled) of an illicit drug other than marijuana dropped to 13 percent, down from 22 percent in 1981. The University of Michigan researchers found "significant" declines in 1986 in the use of amphetamines, stimulants, and methaqualone (or 'quaaludes,' a depressant), and earlier declines in the use of PCP, LSD, and heroin, with some exceptions for PCP use, which remains high in some cities.

In spite of the overall decline in drug use, the proportion of young people who have used illicit drugs by their senior year remains high (58 percent), according to *Alcohol and Drugs in the Public Schools: Implications for School Leaders*, a 1988 joint NSBA-Federation

Table 6
Employment and unemployment of persons who dropped out of high school in 1985-86



¹ The number of persons "employed" is equal to the percent employed by the number of persons in the labor force.

² The number of persons "unemployed, but looking for work" is equal to the percent unemployed multiplied by the number of persons in the labor force.

³ The number of persons "unemployed and not looking for work" is equal to the number of dropouts minus the number in the labor force.

The job outlook for high school dropouts is generally dismal. Of those who dropped out in 1985-86, fewer than one-half were employed. Many unemployed were seeking work, but an even larger number were neither employed nor looking for work. Some of those who were not employed were not seeking work because they were taking care of children at home.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, Youth Indicators 1988, August 1988.

Member state school boards associations publication. Drug use by young people is higher in the U.S. than in any other industrialized nation, the report notes.

The proportion of high school students who use alcohol has remained fairly steady in the past decade. More than two-thirds of seniors reported use of alcohol in the previous month, according to the 1986 University of Michigan survey. Of those students polled, 37 percent reported having had four or more drinks in a row at least once within the previous two weeks.

Approximately one-fifth of seniors queried in 1986 reported daily use of a half a pack or more of cigarettes, according to the survey.

Youth Unemployment

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics' September, 1988, issue of *Monthly Labor Review*, the unemployment rate for teenagers ages 16 to 19 was 16.9 percent in 1987, while the unemployment rate for adults was 4.8 percent. The employment outlook for teenagers who drop out of school is even more dismal. Of the more than 560,000 dropouts in 1985-86, fewer than one half were employed.

But for black males, in particular, the unemployment gap is much more severe. In 1955, for example, the difference between unemployment rates for white and black teenage males was only two percentage points. As of September, 1988, teenage (ages 16-19) unemployment

for black males was 32 percent, compared to 15 percent for white males, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor.

Juvenile Crime

Since 1960, delinquency rates of youth between the ages of 10 and 17 have increased by 130 percent, according to *Education Vital Signs*, Volume III, published in 1987 by NSBA. A 1985 report by the Federal Bureau of Investigation indicated that 16.8 percent of all violent crimes in the U.S. (including murder, rape, armed robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny, motor vehicle theft, and arson) were committed by youths under age 18.

So-called petty crime is on the rise, as well. A 1985 Department of Justice survey of high school seniors showed that 26.8 percent had stolen an item from a store within the previous year; 25.5 percent had trespassed; 20.5 percent had gotten in trouble with the police; 17.4 percent had gotten into a serious fight at school or work; and 14.4 percent had damaged school property on purpose.

Additional factors, of course, can place a child at risk of school failure. As the next chapters on research and policy and on strategies employed in local school programs and at the state level will show, much can be done to mitigate these high-risk factors so that children can succeed in school. ■



RESEARCH RELATED TO CHILDREN AT RISK

A number of research studies shed light on effective ways to help children at risk improve school performance, stay in school, and eventually contribute to society. Here is a brief review of major findings:

Different Problems Need Different Solutions

Studies on the causes of dropping out — by far the largest body of research connected to the issue of children at risk — suggest that successful strategies for dropout prevention and recovery include the following elements:

- different programs designed for different types of dropouts or potential dropouts
- an appropriate mix of educational and noneducational services in each program
- accurate and timely identification of students with a high risk of dropping out
- programs designed for early prevention, late prevention, and recovery.

Early prevention efforts generally focus on children from birth through primary years. Late prevention programs focus on children from the middle school years through high school. Recovery programs serve youth who already have dropped out. In some school systems, late prevention programs are geared to students who already have shown signs predictive of dropout. The Hartford Public schools and a civic organization, for example, sponsor a program for eighth-graders who are two or more years behind in grade level. The program accelerates classroom learning so students can catch up to their grade-level peers, improving the chances that they will graduate from high school.

Studies have shown that programs are successful when they address factors related to students' personal lives, such as pregnancy, substance abuse, or the need for employment, as well as their school life, such as poor grades or disruptive behavior. Successful programs often mix academic and vocational studies, provide more individualized instruction, and have as instructors teachers who are sensitive and responsive to students' needs. But according to various studies, dropout programs first must address students' academic needs through an appropriate curriculum, teaching staff, instructional process, and schedule and location.

A 1982 study on California dropouts, published by the Citizens Policy Center in Oakland, found that dropout prevention programs need to address other needs. Perhaps the most important is students' psychological need for someone to care about them individually. Counseling for potential dropouts often fulfills that important need, according to this and other studies.

According to a 1972 study of elementary school predictors of high school dropout among black males and a 1978 study

... regardless of social class, students have a better chance of success if teachers work with parents so that they're more involved in their children's work.

of prediction of school failure from third-grade data, the earlier a high-risk student is identified, the more likely it is that a sustained effort to prevent dropout will be successful. The results of these studies indicate that some dropouts begin showing signs of academic failure and disengagement from school in the primary grades.

The Importance of Parent Involvement

Research on parent involvement conducted by the Center for Research on Elementary and Middle Schools, John Hopkins University, Baltimore, Md., has shown that, regardless of social class, students have a better chance of success if teachers work with parents so that they're more involved in their children's schoolwork. A recent study involving 293 elementary school students in grades one, three, and five in the Baltimore City schools showed students raised their reading scores between the fall and the spring when parents helped

Table 8
Major findings at age 19 in the Perry Preschool Study

Category	Number ^a Responding	Preschool Group	No-Preschool Group	^b p
Employed	121	59%	32%	.032
High school graduation (or its equivalent)	121	67%	49%	.034
College or vocational training	121	38%	21%	.029
Ever detained or arrested	121	31%	51%	.022
Females only: teen pregnancies, per 100	49	64	117	.084
Functional competence (APL Survey; possible score 40)	109	24.6	21.8	.025
% of years in special education	112	16%	26%	.039

^a Total n = 123

^b Two-tailed p-values are presented if less than .100.

SOURCE: *Changed Lives: The Effects of the Perry Preschool Program on Youths Through Age 19, 1984*

them with studies. Moreover, fifth-grade students whose teachers frequently used parent involvement had more positive attitudes about school and did more homework on weekends.

Additional studies by Johns Hopkins researchers on parent involvement showed that teachers who were leaders in the use of parent involvement in learning activities at home were able to involve parents with all educational backgrounds, not just well-educated parents. Researchers found that when parents were involved by teachers in learning activities at home, they reported they knew more about their children's instructional programs, received many ideas from the teacher on how to help at home, believed the teacher wanted them to help their children, and rated the teacher higher in interpersonal skills and overall teaching ability.

According to Joyce Epstein, director of the Middle Schools Program at the Johns Hopkins research center, the results of these and other studies suggest that if teachers helped parents understand how to help their children at home in specific subjects, more children would improve their mastery of basic skills in those subjects.

See NSBA's 1988 publication, *First Teachers: Parental Involvement in the Public Schools*, for additional research results and school district policy guidance on implementing parent involvement programs.

Early Education as Prevention

Perhaps the best known studies of the effects of preschool education on disadvantaged children are those of the federal Head Start Program and the High/Scope Perry Preschool Project.

A 1985 analysis by the federal Administration on Youth, Children, and Families shows that children who participate in Head Start programs demonstrate immediate, positive gains in cognitive and social development. Head Start children are more likely to be promoted to the next grade once they reach school and less likely to be placed in special education programs. They also tend to be healthier than other children from similar backgrounds (through the program, they receive health services comparable to those available to middle-class children). According to the federal report, the following Head Start components are responsible for academic gains: a highly structured academic curriculum, relatively long program days, and an average enrollment age of four years or older. One caveat: Academic gains are short-lived. Two years after the program, the academic test scores of Head Start children no longer are superior to those of other students.

The High/Scope Educational Research Foundation studies found similar benefits in early education for disadvantaged children. The foundation's Perry Preschool study, conducted in the public Perry Elementary School in Ypsilanti, Mich., tracked 123 poor, black youths of low I.Q. from age three or four to

Developing Profiles of At-Risk Kids

The Milwaukee schools in 1986 began a system for identifying children at risk of school failure. Since then, more than 3,000 students a year have been identified and served through special programs. Using the system's computer data base, school officials identify as at-risk those students in grades 7-12 who: are behind in basic skills or in school; are dropouts, school-age parents, or adjudicated juveniles; or are absent 20 or more days in the previous school year. Wisconsin law requires schools to develop a service plan for at-risk youth and to notify parents that their children are at risk and seek their permission to enroll them in special programs.

The Dade County, Florida, schools also use an extensive data base to create student-at-risk profiles on individual students in grades 3-12 who, for example, have a major disability, receive failing or unsatisfactory grades in three or more classes, have low reading scores, missed school 15 or more days in the previous year, are two or more years behind grade level, have changed schools three or more times in a school year, are enrolled in an English for Speakers of Other Languages program for five semesters, or are suspended on a regular basis. At the beginning of each school year, secondary school principals are provided a school profile that identifies potential dropouts.

Formal processes for identifying at-risk children, of course, allow school officials to provide the additional attention these students need. But being singled out for special programs also may make some students feel stigmatized as dumb, slow, disadvantaged, or disruptive. To prevent labeling, some programs do not overtly identify students as "at-risk" and emphasize the selectivity and high degree of challenge of special programs as reasons for students to be proud they participate. The Academies Program in the Oakland, California, high schools, for example, recruits at-risk students for special academic and professional lab courses in which higher-achieving students also participate. The Academies' expectations are high, says program manager Allie Gordon, which provides extra incentive for kids to do well. "Pretty soon, you see these kids competing with the nonat-risk kids," she says.

age 19. Half the group received no preschool education; the other half received two and one-half hours of preschool education a day for two years. Program components included a highly trained staff, a student-teacher ratio of 1:5 or 1:6, and home visits by teachers.

The Perry Preschool program results: The children who had gone to preschool earned higher grades; were absent from school less; spent less time in special education classes; and were less likely later to be classified as mentally retarded. Two-thirds of the preschool kids (versus half of those who didn't attend) were graduated from high school. Four in ten youths in the preschool group enrolled in postsecondary academic or vocational training, compared to two in ten from the other group.

Additional results included a higher employment rate at the ages of 16 and 19 among preschool students; fewer of them received public assistance; and the pregnancy rate was half that of girls in the group who hadn't been enrolled in the program. High/Scope researchers found that, although preschool improves children's I.Q. scores for only two or three years — the two Perry groups had comparable scores by second grade — the early boost from preschool helped children start school with a scholastic advantage, which led to greater self-esteem, higher academic expectations from teachers, and a stronger commitment to further schooling.

A recent follow-up study involving a program of intensive day-care and family services, conducted in Syracuse, N.Y., had equally encouraging results. In the Syracuse experiment, which began in 1969, 82 families with incomes below the poverty line were given education, health, and counseling services for five years (another 82 families in a control group did not receive services). The mothers generally were young, black, husbandless, jobless, and were dropouts. Beginning in the last trimester of pregnancy and continuing until the children reached age five, the families received weekly visits from trained workers. At age six months, the children started going to an enriched day care program at Syracuse University's Children's Center.

The results of the Syracuse program: Ten years after the program ended, when the children all were age 14 to 16, researchers found that children who received day-care and family services had sharply lower delinquency rates (6 percent, compared to 22 percent for the control group), higher levels of self-esteem, and better school performance than children who had received no services. More than half (53 percent) of the intensive day care group, but only 28 percent of the control group, said they expected to be in school five years later.

Family services and parent education were the focus of another study, the New Parents as Teachers Project, now a state-mandated program in Missouri. Begun as a pilot program in four Missouri school districts in 1981, the New Parents as Teachers Project recruited a total of 380 families who were expecting their first children. Beginning in the third trimester of pregnancy and continuing until the children reached age three, the families received monthly home visits by parent educators, periodic health, educational, and developmental screening, monthly group meetings with other parents, and timely information and guidance about child development, based on Burton White's *The First Three Years of Life*.

New Parents as Teachers results: Compared to children whose families did not participate in the project, children whose families did participate demonstrated advanced intellectual and language development on standardized assessment tests and significantly more aspects of positive social development. The parents were more knowledgeable about child-rearing practices and child development. The parents and children performed well, regardless of socioeconomic disadvantage and other traditional risk factors. The project staff were able to identify and help high-risk children. Parents were more likely to regard the school district as responsive to their children's needs. And parents had positive feelings about the program's usefulness. ■

MAJOR POLICY STATEMENTS

One hopeful sign that helping at-risk children could become a national priority for schools is the interest the subject has generated among education leaders, legislators, government officials, business leaders, and others.

Within the past couple of years, a number of national organizations have concentrated much of their efforts on raising the profile of the at-risk problem. The National Governors' Association, for example, in its 1986 report, *Time for Results: The Governors' 1991 Report on Education*, recommended initiatives to help at-risk children as one of the key areas for action in education through 1991.

In June 1987, the Forum of Educational Organization Leaders, representing 11 of the nation's foremost educational leadership groups, issued a statement expressing alarm about the growing challenge of at-risk students and calling for a policy commitment to these children by local, state, and federal governments.

One hopeful sign that helping at-risk children could become a national priority for schools is the interest the subject has generated among education leaders, legislators, government officials, business leaders, and others.

The Forum, which includes the National School Boards Association, the National Association of School Administrators, the National Education Association, the Education Commission of the States, and the National Congress of Parents and Teachers, called for a "policy guarantee" of educational services to children as an "investment in the nation's future." That policy guarantee includes the following:

- 1) a functional definition of children and youth at risk of school failure
- 2) identification and assessment procedures;
- 3) programs that focus on the specific needs of at-risk youth within school communities
- 4) monitoring and enforcement so students don't "fall between the cracks"
- 5) greater resources to help pay for special programs
- 6) a commitment to linking success in school with the opportunity of a job or post-secondary education.

Yet another example of the narrowing focus on at-risk students:

At the November 1987 annual meeting of the Council of Chief State School Officers, the nation's state education department leaders unanimously endorsed a policy statement that consisted of 11 "essential guarantees" to enable every student to graduate by the year 2000. Those guarantees are:

- 1) an education program of the quality available to students who attend schools with high rates of secondary school graduates
- 2) enrollment in a school which demonstrates substantial and sustained student progress leading at least to graduation from high school
- 3) enrollment in a school with an appropriately certified staff which has continuous professional development
- 4) enrollment in a school with demonstrated effectiveness in instruction and up-to-date technology
- 5) enrollment in a school with safe and functioning facilities
- 6) a parent and early childhood development program beginning ideally at age three, but no later than age four
- 7) a written academic plan through graduation for each student
- 8) a school-family partnership program
- 9) supporting health and social services to overcome conditions that put students at risk of school failure
- 10) information about students, schools, school systems, and the states to help identify students at risk and gauge whether the guarantees are being met
- 11) procedures by which students and parents can make sure guarantees are met.

To illustrate how the guarantees would be put into statutory form by the states, CCSSO drafted model legislation. The legislation would provide high-quality prekindergarten programs for all impoverished or nonEnglish-speaking three- and four-year-olds. It would require schools to follow successful school practices, place at-risk students in "successful" schools (read: where 75 percent of students are performing at or above a predetermined standard), and create individual learning plans for students who continue to be at risk of school failure. And it would require schools to reach out and re-enroll young people who have dropped out.

Some education authorities have described the policy guarantees and model legislation as an ambitious and laudatory sign that state officials are ready to be held accountable for students' academic performance. But many local school officials, it should be noted, disagree with some aspects of CCSSO's guarantees and model legislation. Although they are intended to be voluntary measures, if enacted, the guarantees and legislation, for example, potentially would require local schools to make vast changes without additional funding, according to NSBA officials. Among other things, the CCSSO plan allows state education departments to impose policy and program guidelines and regulations upon school boards. Such action is inherently contrary to the premise of the program: local solutions for local problems. This view is

SCHOOLS THAT WORK

"Good schools can save lives," says Secretary of Education William J. Bennett in *Schools That Work: Educating Disadvantaged Children*, published by the U.S. Department of Education in June 1987. Such schools, he says, give students "a respect for and interest in learning and the habits and motivation necessary for success and achievement. Few students drop out of these schools. Most perform at or above grade level in reading and math; many go on to college. In these schools, children's family circumstances and their parents' lack of income or education do not hold them back." In successful schools, says *Schools That Work*, the principal and staff believe they can make a difference in the lives of children born into poverty; they offer clear standards of behavior, a rich and challenging curriculum, and vigorous teaching; and they provide an "intellectual work ethic" — precise and measurable goals, with learning focused on the basics. The book provides examples of these successful schools and makes 16 recommendations, which include:

- 1) "Mobilize students, staff, and parents around a vision of a school in which all students can achieve." Administrators should: set standards to make the school environment orderly, safe, and academically demanding; replace teachers who don't measure up; and reinforce school goals and pride through academic competitions and other activities.
- 2) "Create an orderly and safe school environment by setting high standards for discipline and attendance." School staff should: establish clear rules of conduct and enforce them fairly and firmly; praise good behavior; and teach students to mediate disputes.
- 3) "Help students acquire the habits and attitudes necessary for progress in school and later in life." Schools should: encourage academic competition; assign challenging homework; and teach values and responsibility through example and classwork.
- 4) "Provide a challenging academic curriculum." Schools should: establish a challenging core curriculum with objectives for all students; and not restrict students arbitrarily through tracking.
- 5) "Tailor instructional strategies to the needs of disadvantaged children." Teachers should: help students relate new information to what they already know; structure learning in small steps, but at a brisk pace; and evaluate students frequently and constructively.
- 6) "Help students with limited English proficiency become proficient and comfortable in the English language — speaking, reading, and writing — as soon as possible." Teachers should: praise the use of English, but not punish use of the native language; and work with parents to encourage them to reinforce English at home.
- 7) "Focus early childhood programs on disadvantaged children to increase their chances of success." Programs

should: focus on children's broader social development; and involve parents in the program through home visits and parent-skills programs.

8) "Reach out to help parents take part in educating their children." Schools should: provide clear information about school expectations; contact parents regularly about their children's performance and how they can help; and offer educational programs for parents.

9) "Instill in children the values they need to progress in school and throughout life." Parents should: reinforce the message that good character counts; and give children responsibility at home.

10) "Demand the best from children and show this concern by supervising children's progress." Parents should: establish curfews during the week; make homework a top priority; encourage reading and learning at home; and restrict television viewing.

11) "Get involved with the schools and with children's education outside school." Parents can: volunteer to assist school staff; and work with other parents to improve the school.

12) "Invest in the education and future success of disadvantaged children." Communities should: form school partnerships with businesses, universities, and local governments; coordinate the activities of community-based agencies with the schools; and work with local churches.

13) "Ensure that education reforms make a difference for disadvantaged students." State and district officials should: set high standards for promotion and graduation; eliminate "social" promotion in favor of mastery of skills and concepts; and adopt creative strategies for attracting, certifying, and retaining gifted administrators and teachers.

14) "Give local school officials sufficient authority to act quickly, decisively, and creatively to improve schools, and hold them accountable for results." State and district officials should: allow more discretion over school budgets, staff, and instructional objectives; and develop incentive or recognition programs for school performance.

15) "Assess the results of school practices, paying special attention to the impact of reform on disadvantaged students." States and school systems should: develop school profiles including test scores and graduation and attendance rates; and hold school officials accountable for improving the achievement of disadvantaged students, including assuming control of schools or school systems unable or unwilling to change.

16) "Support improved education for disadvantaged students through supplementary and compensatory programs, leadership, and research." The federal government should: direct funds to schools with the most disadvantaged students; give states and local school systems greater discretion in adopting strategies for disadvantaged students; and encourage innovative practices by underwriting research and demonstration projects.

echoed by other organizations. Discretionary control of education programs by local school systems, states the Committee for Economic Development in its 1987 report (discussed in later pages), is vital to assuring that education money reaches students most in need of help. Moreover, the CCSO plan would invite litigation against schools based on the statutory guarantees, said NSBA officials.

One of the most acclaimed policy studies is *Children in Need* by the Committee for Economic Development (CED), an independent, nonprofit, research and education organization composed of approximately 250 U.S. business executives and educators. The report says the nation must embark upon "a third wave of [education] reform that gives the highest priority to early and sustained intervention in the lives of disadvantaged children." The report calls on the business community to take the lead in forming new coalitions of business, education, parent, and civic groups and all levels of government.

"What is most compelling is the argument that improving prospects for disadvantaged children is not an expense but an excellent investment, one that can be postponed only at much greater cost to society," the report notes.

"What is most compelling is the argument that improving prospects for disadvantaged children is not an expense but an excellent investment, one that may be postponed only at much greater cost to society."—Committee for Economic Development, *Children in Need*

Many educators and policy experts say *Children in Need* well could be very influential in mobilizing the business community. CED's 1985 report, *Investing in Our Children: Business and Public Schools*, which called for higher educational standards (while acknowledging that disadvantaged children might need special help in improving achievement), was a landmark in the effort to get business leaders involved in improving the schools.

CED's new report takes that mission a step further: It recommends a three-part strategy for improving prospects for disadvantaged children. The strategy includes: 1) prevention through early intervention programs for children from birth to age five and for teenagers; 2) restructuring the foundations of education — school organization, staffing, management, and financing; and 3) retention and re-entry programs for students still in school and for dropouts.

The U.S. is creating a permanent underclass, where youths who have grown up in poverty and despair cannot hold jobs because they lack literacy skills and proper work habits, says *Children in Need*. These

youths are alienated from mainstream society, trapped in a web of dependency and failure. Although schools traditionally have provided a way out of poverty and a path to the American Dream, many schools today are ill-equipped to deal with the problems of poor and minority children.

Even those school systems that have begun to change the way schools are run and how and what students are taught might fail disadvantaged students if they don't reach them early enough. Money for such efforts may be a problem, the report notes, but "any plan for major improvements in the development and education of disadvantaged children that does not recognize the need for additional resources over a sustained period is doomed to failure."

If the present trends continue uncorrected — a million students dropping out each year, half of all high school seniors having inadequate literacy skills, and so on — the U.S. will confront a severe employment crisis. By 1990, the report says, the nation might be short some 23 million capable and willing workers.

Recommendations for early intervention programs, the first CED investment strategy, include:

- prenatal and postnatal care for pregnant teenagers and other high-risk mothers, and follow-up health care and developmental screening for their infants
- "parenting" programs for mothers and fathers, family health care, and nutritional guidance
- high-quality child care for poor working parents that emphasizes social development and school readiness
- high-quality preschool programs for all disadvantaged three- and four-year-olds.

The second investment strategy, restructuring schools, especially those that serve large numbers of disadvantaged students, should be accomplished through a "bottom-up" strategy that focuses on learning in the individual school, the classroom, and between teacher and student. Recommendations include:

- school-based management involving principals, teachers, parents, students in decisions, with all parties allowed flexibility in curriculum, teaching methods, and organization and held accountable for results
- teachers who are committed to and expert in working with disadvantaged children and those with multiple problems. School systems and schools of education should offer these teachers special support.
- smaller schools and classes to raise achievement levels and increase contact with teachers and adults
- school system support for preschool and child-care programs
- up-to-date educational technology integrated into the curriculum to help students and teachers
- support services, such as health services, nutritional guidance, and psychological, career, and family counseling
- extracurricular activities that help build academic, social, or physical skills.

Retention and re-entry programs, the third investment strategy, should be targeted to students at risk of dropping out and those who already have left school. Such programs should:

- combine work experience with education in the basic skills
- operate in an alternative setting that focuses on improving youths' motivation, skills, and self-esteem
- be funded and evaluated over a long term to properly assess progress.

Children in Need says the federal government should make a stronger commitment to educating disadvantaged children through compensatory programs, evaluation of the progress of special reforms and programs for disadvantaged children, and funding of more research, development, evaluation, and technical assistance for federal programs.

States must assure that education money reaches the school systems with the students most in need of help. The states also should take care that they "don't obscure the plight of individual students" with layers of bureaucracy, regulations, and lack of discretionary control by local school systems, says the report.

School systems should be held accountable to the

state and the local community; accountability for student performance should extend to principals, teachers, and parents.

Businesses should establish mutual goals with various groups and focus on "improving the performance and self-esteem of students, developing their talents, and strengthening their relationships with peers and adults." Business leaders can help pull the community together to create or strengthen programs, guide the use of public and private resources, and become persuasive advocates in the political process. Examples: Offer summer job programs, cooperative education, mentoring programs, vocational education, and job placement programs.

CED calls upon U.S. businesses, in addition, to promote employee participation in local school activities. Corporate policy should: 1) encourage participation on school boards "by qualified corporate leaders and managers"; 2) provide release time and flexible schedules for employees to become more involved in their children's education and schools; and 3) encourage executives experienced in management, research and development, and other areas to apply their talents to the problems of the educationally disadvantaged. ■

SCHOOLS AND THE STATES RESPOND

The solutions to helping youth at risk succeed in school, of course, are as varied as the schools and communities in which these children live. And the degree to which schools and states have become involved in the push to address students' special needs also depends a great deal on how the problems are perceived. Problems and solutions related to at-risk kids can be viewed from the state level, district level, school level, and individual classroom level.

As more is done at all levels for children at risk, and as educators become more familiar with the research and policy recommendations related to helping at-risk youth, it becomes clearer that programs must be — and to a large extent have been — initiated at the local level, with appropriate support from states' boards of education, legislatures, and other governing bodies. One of the most important aspects of the state's role, of course, besides providing funding, is to assure that all school systems will act on the problem. To understand how schools and states have worked separately and together for youth at risk solutions, let's examine some of the actions they've taken so far.

Action by the Schools

Although many education, business, and government leaders are concerned that schools aren't doing enough to help the growing number of children at risk of school failure, many school systems, of course, already have programs for children at risk, and some can point to significant success in improving achievement among these students and in keeping them from dropping out.

According to a 1987 survey conducted by the Council of Great City Schools, which represents 45 of the nation's largest urban school systems, the vast majority of city school systems have special programs for students at risk of failure. City schools tend to be ahead of their suburban and rural counterparts because they generally have higher concentrations of children with socioeconomic and family problems, says Sam Hask, the council's executive director. By way of comparison, says Hask, "Fairfax County [Virginia] might have 5 percent of low-achieving students, whereas the average city might have 30 percent." For city schools, the greater concentration of students who have difficulty succeeding in school "creates a whole different set of conditions that need to be addressed," says Hask.

Despite the fact they have taken action to boost achievement, involve parents, address special needs, and so on, city schools still "don't have enough programs to meet the needs of all the kids," says Hask. The situation, says Hask, "is like a river a mile wide and an

...as researchers and school officials have discovered that the earlier prevention programs begin, the greater the likelihood in preventing school failures, schools increasingly have begun to focus on younger children.

inch deep. We can't cover all the kids because we need more resources for programs in individual schools." Most school systems, he says, still rely on government-funded programs such as Chapter 1 for helping children at risk. But Chapter 1, he notes, "covers fewer children in an urban center because the costs of the program are greater."

Still, in urban centers as well as suburban and rural areas, some schools are showing progress. Many school systems started with programs for high school students, the age group in which the manifestations of problems related to school failure — student dropout, teen pregnancy, substance abuse, and so on — are most visible, and many educators would say, least retractable.

But as researchers and school officials have discovered that the earlier prevention programs begin, the greater the likelihood in preventing school failure, schools increasingly have begun to focus on younger children. In addition to beefing up counseling, tutoring, and other programs for students in grades 7-12, many school systems now are introducing similar programs and additional staff to ensure more individual attention to students in grades K-6.

In the primary grades especially, research and practice have shown, children are better able to respond to the message that they can succeed despite significant odds. Primary programs are increasing in number, as are programs designed to provide preschool-age children (including infants and toddlers) and their parents enriching activities that will help children get on track early toward academic achievement.

According to the GAO's 1987 report, *School Dropouts: Survey of Local Programs*, the majority of youth served by dropout programs are poor, urban, minority youth, age 16 or younger. More than 90 percent of the 479 local programs surveyed reported two intervention activities — personal counseling and basic education. Many dropout programs also included career counseling, parental involvement, assistance in obtaining social services, job training and search assistance, and help in getting part-time jobs. More than half the programs offered pregnancy/parent counseling services, and almost half offered dropouts assistance in preparing for the GED high school equivalency certificate. More than one-fifth offered child care services.

Approximately 90 percent of the administrators surveyed for the CAO report said that elements such as a caring and committed staff, a safe and secure classroom environment, a low student-teacher ratio, and personalized instruction are critical to program success.

The report's analysis of programs for distinctive youth groups indicates, for example, that programs for dropouts who re-enter school tended to be geared to an older population — three-quarters of the participants were age 17 or older — who had fallen behind in grade level, were pregnant or already had children, or had limited proficiency in English. Not surprisingly, these programs placed more emphasis on employment-oriented services and were more likely than prevention programs to prepare youth for a GED certificate.

The key feature of specialized pregnancy/parenthood programs — the focus of 25 programs included in the survey — is that most provide prenatal guidance, parenting classes, and assistance in getting social services. Three-quarters of the programs offered some kind of child care.

Programs for Hispanic youth, according to the report's analysis of 26 programs in which more than 50 percent of the youth were Hispanic, emphasized instruction in English as a second language, obtaining social services, and involving parents. To a greater extent than programs for white or black youth, the programs for Hispanic youth sought to place them in part-time jobs, in response to a somewhat greater degree of poverty among Hispanic families.

Local Solutions

How schools are responding to the problems of students at risk, of course, depends on the students themselves: their number, their educational, social, and employment needs, and so on.

In communities with high teen pregnancy rates, for instance, many schools have begun teen parent programs to keep girls in school until they graduate and to help them become better mothers. The Duval County (Florida) Public Schools, for example, has two schools for pregnant teens, a pilot high school day care program for toddlers of students enrolled in the school, and two pilot school-based health clinics. At the middle, junior, and high school levels, the schools offer girls considered at risk of becoming pregnant group counseling to increase their self-esteem and help them set goals.

Nationwide, more than 70 schools have health clinics, started to meet the health needs of adolescents, especially low-income adolescents. Among the broad range of health and medical services available — hearing and vision screening, general physical examinations, immunization against childhood diseases, and so on — pregnancy prevention services often are an integral part. The student population served by one of the first such school health clinic programs, in St. Paul, Minnesota, for example, between 1976 and 1985 decreased to

birthrate from 39 to 37 births per 1,000 students.

Even more common, of course, and certainly of immense value to all students are basic health and sex education/family life courses in which students learn about human reproduction, childbearing and household management, pregnancy prevention, and, increasingly, AIDS prevention (for a more in-depth discussion of AIDS education, see NSBA publications *Safe and the Public Schools* and *Reducing the Risk: A School Leader's Guide to AIDS Education*). Either as part of a comprehensive health curriculum or as a separate program, many schools offer substance abuse programs (see *Drugs and Alcohol in the Public Schools: Implications for School Leaders* available through your state school boards association).

While research and practice have shown that the most successful strategies for at-risk students focus on the benefits of human contact, such as counseling and individual attention from adults, many schools are finding that technology also plays a part in helping students at risk. Among schools surveyed by the Agency for Instructional Technology on their use of technology

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for students at risk of school failure, an overwhelming majority indicated they used computers for instruction.

According to the 1987 survey of 300 school programs, conducted by the Agency for Instructional Technology, the Canadian Education Association, and the National School Boards Association's Institute for the Transfer of Technology to Education, many programs used computers for remedial mathematics and reading, to reinforce skills, and to help prepare students for GED certificates. The students who benefited from such programs included Chapter 1, vocational, limited English-speaking, and special education students.

Funding programs that require low student-teacher ratios, counseling, and perhaps high-tech equipment, of course, can be costly. Some school systems rely on federal or state grants. Other school systems marshal the local business community to help support programs. And many schools use to advantage the influence of community organizations and churches in reaching at-risk children and their parents. (For a more in-depth discussion of this topic, see NSBA's 1988 publication, *First Teachers: Parental Involvement in the Public Schools*.)

Schools That Work: Educating Disadvantaged Children cites one example: A concerned parent in San Diego, Calif., persuaded ministers to devote a Sunday to

education. On the designated Sunday, ministers share the pulpit with educators, who explain how parents can become more involved in their children's schooling. Adults are asked to sign parent involvement pledge cards, and the churches follow up by recognizing successful students from the pulpit, arranging parent meetings, and informing parents where they can get help for their children.

A number of foundations and national organizations are funding efforts in school systems. For example, the National Foundation for the Improvement of Education, the foundation arm of the National Education Association, as of November, 1988, had awarded 43 recipients — among them, Ann Arbor, Mich., Cambridge, Mass., and Glendale, Ariz. school systems — some \$8,670,000 in grants for programs for children at risk. The foundation's grant program is part of N.E.A.'s Operation Rescue, through which the union hopes to help cut the nation's dropout rate in half by 1990.

In developing programs at the local level for youth at risk, school board members and school administrators should keep in mind the elements that research, policy reports, and successful programs point to as components in effective programs. Those elements include:

▶ **Small Class Size and Tutoring.** Individual attention, critical for youth at risk, is accomplished more easily in classes with a low teacher-student ratio and extra help from teacher aids, parent volunteers, and academic tutors. In Baltimore, students in a special transition and follow-up program focusing on remedial and job skills are helped by peer tutors. In an Owsley County, Ky., program, the student-teacher ratio is 1:15, and students get additional help from instructional assistants, volunteers, and peer tutors. Educators say small class size is especially important for primary and early childhood programs. In Boston's early education program for handicapped and other at-risk children, a teacher and an aid work with no more than nine children.

▶ **Appropriate Instructional Style.** Different instructional approaches might be necessary for at-risk students who need significant remedial help or emotional support from teachers. Many middle school educators, for example, believe that team teaching helps teachers focus on kids with problems. A recent study on sixth grade conducted by the National Association of Secondary School Principals indicates that students learn best through team teaching, in which two or more teachers are responsible for a group of students. The instructional style was found to be effective in stimulating intellectual in-

terest while making students feel secure among a core group of caring adults. At the Parker Middle School in Reading, Mass., the approach has helped reduce the number of "angry, alienated students," says Principal John Delaney.

▶ **Counseling Programs.** Counseling is a strong element in many programs, with good cause: Many at-risk kids benefit from being able to talk over problems and seek guidance from adults and respected peers. The Crosswalk program for homeless and "throwaway" teenagers in Spokane, Wash., offers psychological and job skills counseling to help prepare youth to re-enter school or find employment. And at many middle school and junior high and high schools, advisor/advisee programs have been started to link teachers with a core group of students, in some cases providing life skills as well as academic counseling.

▶ **Alternative Programs/Settings.** Many students with problems function better in a school program that is separated from the regular course of studies and/or school building. Alternative programs, especially those set up on a site removed from the regular junior or senior high school, offer students the chance to start over, to be with a specially trained staff and students who have similar problems, and to participate in a more flexible course of studies suited to their academic and employment needs. At Albuquerque's New Futures School for teenage parents, for example, students receive a comprehensive program of academics, job training, day care, counseling, and health services. And at the Magnet School in the Edgewood Independent School District, San Antonio, Texas, underachieving 14- and 15-year-olds receive basic skills instruction from life materials such as newspapers rather than textbooks.

▶ **Employment Skills Training.** Some youth drop out because they need to work to help support themselves and their families; others because they don't see the connection between academic skills and employment — or they don't have the conviction or support to set goals that require finishing school. In the Hartford, Conn., School-to-Work program, a collaboration with the Hartford Chamber of Commerce, senior high school students are counseled by local businesspeople and placed in job internships. High school students

in Oakland, Calif., are appointed to one of four school academies which offer skills training, contact with professional mentors, and help finding jobs.

► **Parent Involvement.** Research at Johns Hopkins, for example, has shown the link between parent involvement and higher achievement. In schools such as the Martin Luther King Elementary School in New Haven, Conn, which features the Comer approach, parents are an important part of the School Planning Management Team. Parents also serve as classroom aides and are relied upon to help create a social climate in which students can learn. The Parents as Teachers program in Columbia, Mo., teaches parents of infants and toddlers how to stimulate their child's development.

► **Specially Trained and Empowered Staff.** Policy reports such as *Children in Need* and *Schools That Work* note that administrators, teachers, and other staff members must receive training in approaches and techniques and must have flexibility and a greater degree of control in designing programs for at-risk youth. In Pittsburgh, for example, teachers participate in extensive inservice training to help boost student achievement through such programs as MAP, which links basic skills instruction to systematic testing and planning. And at the Lassiter Middle School in Louisville, Ky., where 70 percent of students are from low-income families, teams of teachers have significant success in raising student achievement scores and involving students because they are given considerable control over decisions that affect the school and the classroom, says former Principal John Sizemore.

► **Flexible Schedule/Extended Day or Year.** Some students need more academic learning time, and others need flexible schedules so they can work. At the New Futures School, students attend school for a half day and work the other half. Pittsburgh's Summer Academy features remedial reading and mathematics classes to allow low-achieving eighth-graders to be promoted to the ninth grade. In Owsley County, Ky., student schedules include blocks of time rather than the usual class periods, and a resource center is open after school, on weekends, and in the summer.

► **Help from the Community.** *Children in Need* in particular emphasizes the role businesspeople and others in the community can play in helping at-risk youth. *Schools that Work* encourages educators to work with local churches, among other community institutions. In the Edgewood Independent School District (San Antonio, Tx.), local professionals involved in the Communities in Schools Program help students find part-time jobs. At the Fox Middle School in Gainesboro, Tenn., local government agencies and a local university, as well as local businesses, provide services, funding, and professional expertise.

► **Special Services.** Some of the most successful programs include services beyond the typical education sphere: health clinics, job placement programs, bilingual enrichment programs, day care for the children of teenagers, and so on. In Dade County, Fla., for example, the Migrant Program at the elementary school level provides migrant children additional help in language arts and English and at the secondary level provides basic skills tutoring, counseling, and nutrition and medical services.

Profiles of a number of the programs mentioned briefly in this section appear in the Appendix of this report, within the categories of systemwide approaches; early prevention efforts; compensation programs; and prevention, intervention, and reclamation programs.

Actions by the States

An increasing number of states have taken action to help children at risk succeed in school. According to a survey of state initiatives released in November 1987 by the Education Commission of the States, at least 44 states have convened no fewer than 98 groups to study, coordinate services, design programs or make recommendations on youth issues.

South Carolina's Education Improvement Act of 1984, a legislative package of some 60 initiatives, has put the state at the head of the class in enacting such reforms, say many education leaders. Between 1984 and 1988, the state spent \$941 million on education reforms, funded by a penny state sales tax. Some \$268 million state funds in 1988-89 will pay for reform efforts, including programs that serve an estimated 9,000 to 10,000 at-risk students.

Among the initiatives enacted early on, in the 1984-85 school year, are those providing state-funded remedial and compensatory education programs for students in grades 2-12; a "no pass, no play" stipulation requiring schools to exclude from all extracurricular

activities students who fail to pass academic courses; and a requirement that schools create individual school attendance plans, with the help of parents, for any student with three or more unexcused absences in a row.

New statewide promotion standards require school systems to test students in grades 1-12 every year and to retain in grade students who score below the 25th percentile on standardized tests of basic skills.

South Carolina's education reform initiatives have helped at-risk children, says Joanne A. Anderson, director of research for the state senate's education committee, because they "find the problem early." The school attendance initiative, for example, "doesn't wait until the kid has missed 25 days of school" before school officials are required to act, she says.

Among the programs that have been most successful so far in helping at-risk children are those that focus on early identification and education programs. State officials have targeted specific areas — school systems and even individual schools — with high proportions of disadvantaged children. According to the readiness test mandate, new first-graders who do poorly on the cognitive skills test must either repeat kindergarten or participate in a compensatory education program.

In those areas identified as having a high proportion of at-risk children, the state pays for preschool developmental programs for four-year-olds (kindergarten is mandatory for five-year-olds) and for education programs for parents of preschoolers. Anderson says statewide standardized test scores of sixth grade students who were among the first to benefit from school readiness tests show improvement over scores of previous groups of sixth-graders. Fewer children are failing at the middle school level, she adds, and "it appears to be less costly to remediate early."

The results of the state's education improvement legislation for at-risk youth have been mixed, says John C. Cone, executive director of the South Carolina School Boards Association. The law has provided more state money for at-risk students, he says, but local districts also have been required to put money toward programs. Many educators, he adds, are concerned about the state's dropout rate — 31 percent — which not only has not decreased, but may increase when initiatives like mandatory high school exit exams are put in place. The solution to helping educate and graduate the difficult students who traditionally have dropped out and continue to do so, he predicts, will require "turning around the attitudes of the kids themselves."

At the local level, the legislation already has prompted significant change in many South Carolina schools. In the rural Union County schools [enr: 5,700], for example, the legislation has led to a systemwide remediation program, the expansion of the gifted and talented program, new teacher and principal evaluation systems, "parenting" volunteer, and adopt-a-school programs, and a teacher in-service program on such

classroom issues as effective instructional styles, lesson planning, and motivating students.

"We're seeing progress," says Superintendent Sam F. Drew. One sign: The system's Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) score average went up 22 points in 1987-88. Another is the results of the remediation program for elementary and secondary students who don't meet the state's standards on its own basic skills test or the California Test of Basic Skills. Since the remediation program began four years ago, fewer students are scoring in the bottom quartile on the achievement tests, and districtwide test score averages have jumped from below to above the national norm (48 percent of students scored at or above the norm in 1984, compared to 56 percent in 1987-88). The remediation program has helped cut the annual grade-level dropout rate in that time from 9 percent to 2.5 percent, in part because students are performing better and that success has encouraged them to stay in school.

The Union County schools, like many of their counterparts in the state, can point to additional programs they began which complement the state initiatives. Union County schools now hold workshops for parents and an outreach program in which specialists work with parents of preschool-age children in their homes to prepare the children for school. Another school-initiated program, Teacher Expectations for Student Achievement, begun four years ago with the system's remedial teachers and expanded for regular classroom teachers, helps promote high expectations of all students. The cumulative effect of the state initiatives, says Karen Callison, former superintendent in Union County, is "they've changed the way of thinking. As a result, districts have begun to do more on their own."

A Blueprint for State Action

South Carolina's example is inspiring, say many authorities on at-risk children, because of its comprehensive approach to simultaneously raising standards and helping those students who are most likely to be left behind. A number of states — among them North Carolina, Missouri, Minnesota, Indiana, Illinois, Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, Washington, Wisconsin, and California — have created and funded programs for identifying and helping at-risk children, and interest is growing in such legislation.

The National Governors' Association (NGA) has made reducing the risk of school failure one of its priorities for the governors' actions in school reform through 1991. NGA's 1986 report, *Time For Results: The Governors' 1991 Report on Education*, provides a checklist for action in helping at-risk children become ready for school:

- provide in-home assistance for first-time, low-income parents of high risk infants

- develop outreach programs with community and religious organizations to help young children from single-parent families
- provide kindergarten for all five-year-olds
- provide high-quality early childhood development programs for at-risk four-year-olds, and where feasible, three-year-olds
- provide parents of preschool children information on successful "parenting" practices
- improve preschool programs in day care centers, including staff training and accreditation or similar standards
- get state agencies to work together to provide programs for young children and their parents.

Time For Results recommends the following for the second key area, assuring help for at-risk kids in meeting higher standards:

- provide extra help in the basic skills for students with major deficiencies
- offer incentives, technical assistance, and training for teachers and principals to employ effective school and classroom procedures and practices
- provide a challenging curriculum for all children
- provide valid and reliable assessment of student performance so students, parents, and teachers can work to correct deficiencies
- reward schools for making progress in educating all children, including at-risk children
- establish cooperative programs involving schools and homes so parents can support their children's teachers
- develop incentive programs or direct state aid to reduce class sizes of kindergarten and the lower grades
- establish alternative programs for high school students who have dropped out of school
- establish a way to intervene in the management of school districts that don't make progress with low-achieving students.

As a "laudable goal," suggests *Time For Results*, each state by 1991 should implement 80 to 90 percent of the recommended strategies. The report recommends four indicators for assessing states' progress toward helping at-risk children: readiness to enter first grade; progress of students in meeting minimal basic skills standards; improvement in school attendance or reduction in truancy; and reduction in the dropout rate.

The Governors Report Results in Education

According to *Results in Education: 1987* and *Results in Education: 1988*, NGA's annual follow-up reports to *Time For Results*, a majority of states have begun initiatives to help at-risk children in school. At least half the states offer some form of technical assistance to help bring parents into school or extend classroom

activities in the home. In 1988, 32 states initiated, expanded, or considered parent involvement activities. Twenty-one states offered training in sound parenting practices, and 18 states offered teacher training in how to interact with parents about student performance.

Among the state policies and practices that stand out are those in four states — Arkansas, Indiana, Mississippi, and Virginia — which require parent involvement for school accreditation. Schools in Delaware and Oklahoma require teachers to be trained in effective parent involvement practices as part of their certification. Kentucky and Tennessee offer both parenting and basic skills instruction, and Oregon began a statewide comprehensive preschool education program for four-year-olds.

In the area of school choice, Minnesota started a program in 1987 wherein dropouts and "learners at risk" are given the option of attending alternative schools or learning centers.

At least ten states are considering or implementing preschool and early childhood education for at-risk children in 1988, according to *Results in Education: 1988*. Half the states already offer programs for at-risk preschoolers, generally for four-year-olds. In Arkansas, Nebraska, and Oregon, preschool programs focus on handicapped children. In Florida, early education efforts are directed to migrant children and other economically disadvantaged children. States such as Michigan, Delaware, Louisiana, and Ohio have pilot early education programs; other states, such as California, New Jersey, New York, and South Carolina, have statewide programs. During the 1985-86 school year, some 36,000 low-income and limited English-speaking four-year-olds were enrolled in state-funded preschool programs in Texas, for example.

To help children who are not meeting basic academic standards, 27 states pay for compensatory education programs involving intensive instruction such as in summer school, after-school remediation, and special tutoring. Some states require schools to provide remedial instruction for students who fall below state performance standards. Pennsylvania's TELLS (Testing for Essential Learning and Literary Skills) program, for example, assesses students at grades three, five, and eight and provides extra help for students scoring below an acceptable level.

Additional state strategies include: lowering class size, especially in the primary grades; developing individual student improvement plans for low-achieving children; and issuing public reports on test scores of all schools and school districts. Several states, including South Carolina and Kentucky, publicly recognize schools that show progress and sanction schools that consistently fail to show progress.

A leader in coordinating state strategies for at-risk students, according to *Results in Education: 1988*, is North Dakota, where the departments of health, human services, and public instruction are jointly developing a

statewide system for tracking children from birth to age five who are at risk of developmental delays due to biological or environmental factors.

Of the states with mandated programs for at-risk youth, a majority have programs specifically for dropout prevention. Thirty-five states have or are developing dropout programs, according to *Results in Education: 1987*. The most popular state strategies involve

alternative schools for dropouts or potential dropouts. Another frequently cited program involves job-skills training. At least two states, Texas and Oklahoma, have created guidance centers as a discipline alternative to suspending or expelling disruptive youth.

A more in-depth look at initiatives for at-risk youth in a few states be found in the Appendix. ■

POLICY IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOOL BOARDS

The policy implications of focusing the schools' efforts on children at risk of school failure cover a vast area — and, of course, vary from community to community and from school to school, depending on the needs of children. In one community with a small proportion of high-risk children, a special tutoring/counseling program might be appropriate; in another with a large proportion of high-risk children, school officials might need to make substantial, systemwide changes in the way schools are run and children are taught.

The need for such policies is evident. Certainly, there is sufficient national concern over and commitment to the issue of at risk children from education, business, and government leaders. And research and practice have shown that schools can help make a difference in these children's lives. Schools might not create A students out of F students, but they can motivate students to stay in school, reinforce achievement, and help provide direction to the lives of youth with multiple problems.

Restructuring Schools

"We have no greater challenge nor is there a more urgent imperative facing this nation and its schools than to assure that children and youth at risk of school failure become productive workers, nurturing members of families, and effective citizens," said David W. Hornbeck, then Maryland state superintendent of schools, in a 1986 address to the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). As president of CCSSO in 1987, Hornbeck focused the council's activities on at risk youth and has been one of the foremost advocates for substantial action.

The schools have a decade in which to alter their course sufficiently to avoid serious negative consequences from the growing problem of school failure, says Hornbeck. His assessment of where schools have failed and his prescription for change is blunt:

We have largely fashioned a system that serves well those who are white, middle to upper income, well motivated and from relatively stable families. As students have deviated more and more from that norm, the system has served them less and less well. We sometimes seem to say to them, "We've provided the system. It's not our fault if you don't succeed." Whether that attitude is right or wrong, the critical mass of at risk children and youth has grown so large proportionately that we are in some danger of being toppled by our sense of rightness and righteousness. Instead of blaming the students for not fitting the system, we must design and implement a structure that provides appropriate educational services to those most at risk.

Where Do Schools Begin?

Hornbeck and others — notably, the Committee for Economic Development — have called for a restructuring of schools, if necessary, to help at risk kids. The notion of restructuring schools, a recurring theme in the school reform movement, however, can be mind-boggling for board members.

Sam Husk, executive director of the Council of Great City Schools, reassures, "all the policy apparatus is there." Addressing the needs of students at risk, he says, "is a question of money for staff development, training for principals and teachers. . . and a good healthy dose of evaluation to find out what does work."

School systems that use federal or state money for prevention or compensation programs might find they spend little to help students at risk. But in other school systems, the kind of individual attention and monitoring that high-risk students often need can be expensive. The Edgewood Independent School District in San Antonio, Texas, for example, in 1987-88 spent \$500,000 of its school budget on an alternative school program that served 150 high-risk junior-high-age kids. Although effective, the two-year-old program was cancelled for 1988-89 because the school budget was cut due to declining state revenues. The Pittsburgh schools are in a more fortunate position to fund programs for at risk students: The per-pupil budget in 1987-88 was more than \$6,000; and millions of dollars in grants from foundations, banks, and corporations help pay for special programs.

The financial aspects of providing services for children at risk undoubtedly will take some creative fund raising or budget maneuvering. But it's important, say many experts on students at risk, that school officials begin now to assess how they can turn their schools around so that all children can achieve.

Policy Suggestions

Here are some policy suggestions from experts on students at risk:

- ▶ Create a policy that commits the schools to helping all children learn. Most schools with programs for youth at risk have taken the incremental approach, beginning with a policy statement that the schools are committed to helping all children learn. Much of the seminal work on characteristics of effective schools conducted by Ron Edmonds and others has shown, for example, that poor, inner-city, minority children can achieve in school. Board members and school staff must become

familiar with this body of research to become convinced that their efforts to help high-risk children indeed will improve students' academic performance, social skills, and ability to set and meet goals.

► Once such a policy is in place, school officials can begin to look at specific aspects of their school program and indicators of school success or failure. Among the questions board members should ask: What is the dropout rate? At what ages and grade levels does dropout start and peak? Why do students drop out? What is the truancy rate? At what age and grade level does school attendance become a problem? What proportion of students present discipline problems or are disruptive? At what age and grade level are discipline problems most severe? How many girls become pregnant each year, and what are their ages and grade levels? To what extent is drug/alcohol use a problem? What proportion of students are placed in special needs programs? Which courses of study give students the most problems? In which courses do high-risk students show the most success? What kinds of teaching strategies — individual instruction, computer-assisted instruction, peer tutoring — work best for high-risk students? What kinds of extracurricular activities are available to students, and which are most popular?

► Examine the needs of the community. Many school systems conduct needs assessment surveys. This is a good place to start, say many experts on youth at risk. Find out what parents and others in the community want for their children's education, and ask them for suggestions on how to improve the schools. Ask specific questions, such as: Do parents need day care services? Do families need before- or after-school care programs? Do families need health services? Do parents or children need help with English, language, or mathematics skills? Are jobs skills training efforts effective? Would parents be willing to volunteer as classroom aides or special program monitors? Would parents like to be able to choose the school their children attends?

► Develop a demographic profile of the school system. Use local, state, and federal demographic information, such as U.S. Census data, population surveys, and local revenue levels for the schools, to create a picture of your community — and of individual school communities. Some factors to include: How many families live below the poverty line? How

many families are headed by single parents, particularly single mothers? What is the education level of parents? How many immigrant families live in the district? How many families are limited in English proficiency? What is the unemployment rate for adults and for youth? What agencies already are helping local families?

Assemble and analyze demographic information, and make sure board members, central office administrators, principals, teachers, and others are given the system and individual school profiles and use them in making decisions that affect students.

► Involve parents in efforts for their children at risk. Studies have shown that parent involvement is key to helping students improve academic performance and remain in school. But studies also show that few parents — perhaps 20 percent — know how to help their children. The desire to see their children succeed is just as strong among disadvantaged or disenfranchised parents, but they often don't know how to go about getting help for their children. (For ideas and solutions, see NSBA's *First Teachers: Parental Involvement with Public Schools*).

Getting Parents Involved

Joyce Epstein of Johns Hopkins University's Center for Research on Elementary and Secondary Schools, who has conducted studies on parent involvement, advises that parent involvement should be emphasized K-12, not just in the primary grades, as is common in many school systems. Epstein's recommendations for school board leadership in getting parents involved:

- 1) Write a policy that fully outlines and discusses the district's commitment to parent involvement.
- 2) Establish a clearinghouse, library, or dissemination office for parent involvement practices and research.
- 3) Support in-service teacher-training and administrator-training programs.
- 4) Support master teacher, mentor, lead teacher, or other career ladder programs to build a cadre of specialists in the use of parent involvement.
- 5) Establish funding and recognition programs, including small grants to school districts and school-teacher-administrator-parent teams to develop and evaluate programs in parent involvement.
- 6) Support the development of programs of special populations of parents, including teenage parents and nonEnglish-speaking parents.
- 7) Encourage and recognize businesses that permit their employees to become involved in their children's education in order to strengthen the schools, the community, and the citizens and workers of the future.

► **Define and identify youth at risk.** Using demographic information, school records, and other sources, create a definition for high-risk students which can be used to identify students who need help. One suggested definition is that students need attention if they are:

- one or more years behind grade level in reading or mathematics skills (K-8), or if they perform at very low stanine or percentile rankings on state or national skills or competency tests
- three or more credits behind age/grade level in credits toward graduation (9-12)
- chronically truant
- school-age parents
- adjudicated delinquents
- experiencing personal and/or family alcohol or drug abuse
- suffering family trauma such as death, divorce, violence, separation, or unemployment
- experiencing emotional or physical health problems
- victims of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse
- limited in English proficiency
- economically or otherwise disadvantaged.

► **Develop a record-keeping system,** preferably included in the school's data base, which

contains comprehensive academic and personal information about individual students, their problems, and strategies that work for them.

► **Evaluate programs.** In addition to assessing individual student progress, conduct program evaluations periodically to find out whether at risk programs are meeting their goals, which strategies seem most successful, and where programs might need some change.

► **Give administrators and teachers flexibility in helping students at risk.** Experts have cautioned that dealing with such a complex set of problems affecting children requires more creative thinking, less bureaucracy, and more participatory decision-making than many school systems are used to. No two students may have the same set of problems, and principals and teachers should have the freedom to try unorthodox strategies.

► **Work with local businesses, agencies, and organizations to help develop and fund programs.** The Committee for Economic Development has urged business leaders to take the lead in creating strategies to help at-risk youth. School leaders nevertheless aggressively should seek support from local businesses, suggesting ways they might contribute to the

Coordinating Efforts for At-Risk Youth

The Dade County, Florida, schools have been working with numerous civic and community groups since 1978 through a program called Dade Partners, which focuses primarily on adopt-a-school programs. Increasingly, the Dade Partners' efforts are being directed to at-risk youth. The school system, for example, works with the Mental Health Association on several projects. One is Listen to Children (LTC). Professionals from the MHA train school volunteers to help at-risk kids work through their problems. Each week, listeners meet at school individually with their students for a half-hour.

Programs like LTC have come about because of a long history of working together, says Linda D. Brown, supervisor in the schools' department of community participation. To make such efforts work, she says, "there must be a commitment from the superintendent or the school board." The schools also must give the effort for at-risk kids some visibility. "Let people know that you're opening doors and you want them involved in the school system," says Brown. To launch Partners, the Dade schools invited all the civic and community groups to attend a social function at which they were presented promotional materials, commitment statements, and

letters of support for the program from the mayor. Subsequently, school officials turned to the Chamber of Commerce, key civic and business groups, and local politicians to ask for help in recruiting other groups for the program.

Getting programs going is mainly a matter of developing good relationships with individuals who represent civic groups and businesses, says Brown. Ask for their help, and be specific about what you'd like the group to do for at-risk students. What helps, she says, is assigning one person from the school system to work with one person from the community group, and to become members of each others' advisory boards or committees. Draw up a formal proposal on the roles and responsibilities of both the schools and community agency or business group, and have both parties review and sign it. In the case of volunteer efforts, formal evaluations might be necessary only if there were problems.

Many school systems do not have extensive community involvement, however. In these cases, suggest many educators, it's best to create a task force for at-risk youth, including local civic and business leaders, religious leaders, representatives of community agencies, parents, and others.

effort through grants, volunteer assistance, mentor programs, job training and placement, and other means. Likewise, school officials should work closely with the community's social service agencies, churches, youth groups, day care centers, and training programs to come up with program and funding strategies that use

each group's strengths to advantage and reduce the likelihood of gaps or redundancy in programs for at-risk youth.

Creating school policies to help at-risk students must be a concerted effort, say experts, if schools hope to turn around low student achievement and high rates of school failure. ■

CALL TO ACTION

For many students, school reform to date resembles the track coach who, when confronted by a jumper unable to jump at five feet, puts the bar at six feet without providing new or extra coaching or help, said Harold Hodgkinson, a demographer and moderator of the Forum of Educational Organization Leaders, at a press conference marking the release of the Forum's policy statement on at-risk youth.

"If we wish to maintain or improve our present standard of living, we must work smarter," said Hodgkinson. "It is clear that it is not possible to succeed if only middle class people from stable families work smarter. The ability, the skill, the capacity to work smarter must, for the first time in human history, be characteristic of the mass of our population. We simply cannot achieve those objectives so long as we have so many youth in such significant jeopardy."

The June, 1987, gathering of the nation's top education organization leaders provided ample evidence that youth at risk of school failure is indeed a pressing problem that the schools cannot ignore or postpone action on. Although the Forum suggested that the economic imperative of educating all children was sufficient reason to act — the Forum's statement reminded us, for instance, that 35 years ago, there were 17 people working for each retiree, but by 1992, there will be only three — it is by no means the only or the most important reason.

As Forum member William F. Pierce, former executive director of the Council of Chief State School Officers, noted: "Whether one approaches the issue of the education of students at risk of school failure from a position of social justice or one of economic necessity, it is clear that the needs of these young people are not being adequately met. It is also clear that the failure to do so will have serious social, political, and economic consequences."

For school board members, the imperative to act is immediate. Said Forum member Jonathan T. Howe, then president of NSBA, "We in the local communities — school board members, superintendents, other administrators, and teachers — must assume an active, constructive, and cooperative leadership role in bringing about the changes called for" in the Forum's policy statement. "Our preeminent responsibility," said Howe, "is to produce, nurture, and sustain educational excellence and equity in the public schools."

NSBA President Leonard Rovins has identified as one of the association's key objectives an effort to impress on citizens and the federal government the need for more funding for programs targeted to students with special needs, including, he says, "at-risk youth, dropouts, and those whose primary language is not English."

Education leaders, business leaders, and government leaders all have called for concerted efforts to help those students least able to help themselves. Now, it's up to local school officials to act. ■

APPENDIX 1

School Programs for At-Risk Youth

Many school systems already have effective programs for children at risk of school failure. Here are some examples of both systemwide and individual school programs:

SYSTEMWIDE APPROACHES

Pittsburgh Public Schools

The Pittsburgh schools [K-12; enr.: 40,000] are regarded by many educators as a model for the revitalization of urban schools. Efforts to help at-risk youth have resulted in the lowering of dropout rate from 35 percent in 1980 to 25 percent in the 1987-88 school year, as well as significant improvements in student achievement in the basic skills.

One successful program is the Pittsburgh Summer Academy, a dropout prevention program aimed at between 80 and 100 over-age eighth-grade students who are not eligible for promotion to ninth grade. Summer Academy students attend six hours of remedial reading and mathematics classes a day for 20 days. Students who complete the program successfully are promoted to ninth grade and receive a credit toward the 22 needed for graduation. Students eligible for Job Training Partnership Act summer employment are provided a daily stipend. The program, which "graduated" 47 out of 70 students in 1987, emphasizes counseling and parent involvement. The students who go on to high school are assigned teacher mentors to help keep them on track in school.

At the elementary level, the schools in 1987 began the Community Education Activity Program. In three pilot schools in low-income areas, 150 low-achieving students in grades 1-5 attend summer school classes in reading and mathematics. During the school year, the students attend Saturday morning classes in these subject areas. Parents of students in the program are required to attend education seminars and serve as program monitors.

Perhaps the most distinctive program, though, is a systemwide achievement program called MAP (Monitoring Achievement in Pittsburgh), which links instruction in the basic skills to systematic testing and planning. Under the MAP program, begun in 1981, students are tested regularly to check their mastery of specific systemwide and grade level objectives. Computer-scored tests then are used to diagnose where students need help mastering skills in mathematics, reading, writing, critical thinking, and science.

MAP is credited with having boosted standardized achievement scores. Example: In 1981, 64 percent of first grade students and 50 percent of fifth-grade

students scored at or above national norms in reading on the California Achievement Tests. In 1986, 80 percent of first graders and 62 percent of fifth graders scored at or above the norms.

Additional programs, such as an intensive science program linked to college scholarships for black students, dovetail with dropout prevention and achievement improvement programs. Such programs are supported at least in part by Pittsburgh's fundraising efforts, which in the past several years have garnered several millions of dollars in grants from foundations, corporations, and universities.

In spite of impressive gains, improving student achievement — especially closing an achievement test score gap of some 20 points between black and white students — continues to be the school board's top priority. Among new programs for children at risk: a pilot early education program for three- and four-year-olds, underway in two schools in low-income areas. And the schools have begun pilot programs in peer tutoring and peer counseling. In January 1989, the system will begin a pilot program in eight schools, funded by a \$12.5 million grant from the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The "New Futures Community Schools" program will offer an extended school day and year, a community health program, jobs for secondary students, and an infant care program.

For information, contact: Pat Crawford, Public Information Officer, Pittsburgh Public Schools, 541 South Bellefield Ave., Pittsburgh, Pa. 15213; 412/622-3500.

Edgewood Independent School District San Antonio, Texas

The Edgewood Independent School District [PK-12; enr.: 15,500] is the poorest of San Antonio's 15 school systems. Moreover, it's the fifth poorest among Texas's 1,063 school districts. Eighty-five percent of students receive subsidized lunches. About half the students, 80 percent of whom are Hispanic, are believed to be at risk of school failure. During the 1985-86 school year, 347 students dropped out.

Since then, the Edgewood schools have begun or expanded a half-dozen programs for students at risk. At the elementary school and junior high level, for example, the school year is extended six weeks for classes for slow and/or low-achieving students.

In a junior high and a high school, professionals from a number of Texas companies and agencies, such as Southwest Bell and the Texas Employment Commission, help students locate part-time jobs through the Communities in Schools Program. A teen parent

program in the secondary schools helps students keep up with their school work and teaches them how to care for an infant.

Project COPE (Children of Offenders Prevention and Education), funded by the Texas Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse, provides after-school counseling sessions at an elementary school for the children of incarcerated or substance-abusing adults. Counselors from a nearby university lead sessions on self-esteem, substance abuse, and dealing with feelings. At two junior high schools, a program called *Se Pude* ("I can"), funded by the State Department of Health and Human Services, provides drug education and counseling sessions for students during the school day and for parents and students in the evening.

For information, contact: Soledad Ramirez, At-risk Coordinator, Edgewood Independent School District, 4127 Eldridge, San Antonio, Texas 78237; 512/433-9412.

Dade County, Florida, Public Schools

Miami's Dade County Public Schools [PK-12; enr: 254,235], the nation's fourth largest school district, has a generous share of problems related to children at risk, who by a conservative estimate comprise a third of the system's students. More than 100 languages are spoken, for example, in a student body composed of 43 percent Hispanic students, 33 percent black students, 23 percent white students, and 1 percent Asian/American Indian. Since 1985, when a study showed that 30 percent of eighth-graders were dropping out before graduating, the schools have made a major commitment to dropout prevention.

Dade County's comprehensive approach relies on the schools' student management information system, a data base of the student population. The computer system creates student-at-risk profiles on individual students in grades 3-12 who, for example, have a major disability; receive failing or unsatisfactory grades in three or more classes; have low reading scores; miss school 15 or more days in the previous year; are two or more years behind grade level; have changed schools three or more times in a school year; are enrolled in an English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program for five semesters; or are suspended on a regular basis. At the beginning of each school year, secondary school principals are provided a school profile that identifies potential dropouts.

The schools have some 91 secondary programs for high-risk students and seven alternative schools. Systemwide efforts include counseling for children at risk; in all 24 high schools and at 48 junior high schools, for instance, special counselors work just with those kids identified as potential dropouts.

Special programs include HIPPPY (Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters), a home-based

education program begun in Miami in 1985-86 and cosponsored by the National Council of Jewish Women. The two-year program teaches the parents of inner-city children between the ages of four and five how to instruct their children at home in language, sensory discrimination, and problem-solving. Additional preschool programs at three schools help prepare high-risk three- and four-year-old children for kindergarten.

In addition to regular compensatory education programs such as Chapter 1 and basic skills tutoring programs, Miami also has the Migrant Program for children of migrant workers who need additional help in language arts and English. At the secondary level, the Migrant Program provides basic skills tutoring, counseling, and nutrition and medical services.

Primary school students in the Follow Through Program get extra instructional help and medical, dental, and nutritional services. Parents of students in grades K-6 in Miami's For My Child and Me program are trained how to work with their children at home to enrich their educational experiences.

Students in grades 4-6 at seven schools involved in the COMET (Career Opportunities Motivated through Educational Technology) partnership program work with a computer teacher, a career education specialist, and a member of the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce to learn about careers through computer simulations.

Dade County's extensive network of alternative programs for students at-risk includes an in-school program for middle school students, operated at two centers, which features a two-week orientation and intensive individual and group counseling sessions designed to raise self-esteem and promote better interpersonal relationships. Approximately 600 students are enrolled in alternative programs that serve juvenile offenders, students who have been expelled, students who need temporary shelter, and students seeking substance abuse rehabilitation.

Adult/vocational education programs designed to help at-risk students include VIP, the Robert Morgan Vocational/Technical Center Vocational Interdisciplinary Program for 100 tenth graders, which combines academics, vocational training, employment skills, and a workstudy program.

Some 2,900 potential dropouts in 13 high schools participate in the Private Industry Council's (PIC) employment training program, a multi-year sequential program which links employability training to part-time jobs during the school year, guaranteed summer jobs and, upon graduation, a full-time job in the private sector. Students receive remedial help and counseling, in addition to job training.

For information, contact: George Rounce Jr., Executive Director, Division of Dropout Prevention, Dade County Public Schools, 1450 Northeast Second Ave., Miami, Fla. 33132; 305/350-3395.

EARLY PREVENTION EFFORTS

Parents as Teachers Program Columbia, Missouri, Public Schools

In Columbia, Mo., some 650 families with infants or toddlers during the 1988-89 school year are learning how to become better parents and how to provide their children enriching experiences in the home. The school system's Parents as Teachers program, started in August 1985, is one of 32 school districts that serve as centers for the parent training program, now a statewide mandate.

In Columbia's program, 11 specially trained staff members visit homes of parents enrolled in the program approximately seven to ten times a year — more frequently in the child's first year or if there is more than one young child in the home. Parents participate in the program from the mother's third trimester of pregnancy until the child's third birthday. During their visits, the Parents as Teachers staff members cover five areas: information on child development; activities and toys that stimulate development; ways to sharpen parents' observation skills; what to expect next in their child's development; and periodic screening of the child's vision, hearing, and development of language, motor, and social skills.

The \$150,000 program, which receives about a third of its funding from the school system and the rest from the state, is open to any parent, although the state sets a quota for reimbursement of 30 percent of the total eligible families in the district (Columbia's quota is 740 families, which the system anticipates it will serve by December 1988). The schools recruit families through local and federal agencies, day care centers, churches, local physicians, and childbirth classes. Columbia's recruitment efforts now are focused on hard-to-reach families, such as those who are poor, are headed by single parents, or in which both parents work.

The program "gives parents more confidence in their role as parents," says Jerri Deming, Columbia's coordinator of early childhood education. "It provides built-in support, and it helps children get on the right track" in school, says Deming. "We feel good because parents are very positive about the program."

For information, contact: Jerri Deming, Coordinator of Early Childhood Education, 105 Waugh St., Columbia, Mo. 65201; 314/442-6690.

Early Childhood Program Boston Public Schools

The Boston schools have had an early childhood program since 1973, when the state mandated services for special students ages three to 19 through Chapter 766. In 1980, the program was expanded with state funding to target handicapped preschoolers and other at-risk children ages three to five. The program includes

clusters of three or four classes at each of 12 elementary schools throughout the city. A total of 435 children were enrolled in 1987-88. The program cost the school department \$500,000 for support personnel, supplies, and some special teachers, and cost the state \$250,000 for special programs.

Administered through the schools' special education division, the program serves handicapped youngsters as well as those who meet other criteria for risk of later school failure, such as low family income and lack of developmental stimulation at home. Children with special needs (learning disabled, autistic, emotionally disturbed, and so on) attend special classes; for example, some children with medical problems attend a class linked to Boston City Hospital and Wheelock College. The child-teacher ratio is low — one teacher and an aide for every nine children (or for every six children in a multihandicapped class).

The program includes a half-day of the special classes and a half-day of "mainstreaming" with a regular kindergarten class. Approximately a quarter of the children enrolled go on to regular kindergarten classes. The program also is linked to an early intervention program for children from birth to age three who were low-birth-weight babies. Approximately a quarter of the early childhood program's children come from this group.

The program focuses a great deal on family and community involvement. Outreach to parents is conducted in eight languages (preschool classes are conducted in three — English, Spanish, and Chinese). Every center has a parent group, and parents are offered additional support through a local hospital and a health maintenance organization.

For information, contact: Valerie Gomes, Early Childhood Program Adviser/Special Needs, Special Education Department, 26 Court St., Boston, Mass. 02108; 617/726-6200 ext. 3973.

COMPENSATION PROGRAMS

The Comer Process Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary School New Haven, Connecticut

The Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary School (K-4; en: 250 students) is one of two New Haven elementary schools at which Dr. James P. Comer, a child psychiatrist at the Yale University Child Study Center, in 1960 began a pilot project to help low-income, high-risk children gain some of the same skills that children from better educated, higher-income families gain at home. Through the Comer Process, the school was one of the first to use participatory decision-making and extensive in-service sessions to try to close the development gap. The process now is used in all New Haven elementary

schools, several middle schools, and in at least two other school systems.

The Comer process is a school-based management approach that focuses on changing attitudes and working relationships. Administrators, parents, teachers, and support staff members work collaboratively through a government and management group, a mental health/support staff group, and a parents group to create a social climate in which children are expected to achieve, academic programs are based on achievement data, and staff development is focused on school goals.

Here's how the process works at Martin Luther King The School Planning Management Team, composed of the principal, several teachers, the learning center teacher, and parents, designs a comprehensive plan to meet goals for student achievement, social skills, and staff development and deals with general and specific school problems. The principal retains authority, but most decisions are reached by consensus. Members of the mental health team, which includes the school's psychologist, nurse, social worker, and learning center teacher, work with children individually.

The school revolves around the concept that every child can achieve. Class size is limited to 27 students (regular class size in the district can reach 35 students). A key part of the process is parent involvement. Parents serve as classroom aides, which not only means more individual attention and better discipline, it also helps parents develop employment skills and career goals. The parent aides also get other parents involved; the typical turnout at a school pot-luck supper, for example, now is 250 parents, whereas only a handful of parents showed up at school events before the process began.

The Comer Process gets results: In 1980, Martin Luther King's fourth-grade students, almost 100 percent of whom were black, ranked at the bottom of 33 elementary schools in the city. Students were about 18 months behind grade in national achievement levels on standardized tests, and both schools had severe discipline problems.

In 1987, with little or no change in the socioeconomic background of students, the school ranked fifth in academic performance — students score nearly 18 months above grade level on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. The school ranks first in attendance (96 percent) and has no serious discipline problems, says Edward J. Ferrucci, principal for the past six years. A big factor in the school's success, Ferrucci says, is a change in attitude. "Teachers won't say 'can't' he notes. "They say these kids can learn. We just might have to do it differently."

For information, contact: Edward J. Ferrucci, Principal, Martin Luther King Elementary School, 560 Dowell Ave., New Haven, Conn. 06511; 203/787-6666.

Fox Middle School Project

Jackson County, Tennessee, Public Schools

The Fox Middle School Project focuses dropout prevention efforts on the school's 400 students in grades 5-8. Jackson County, Tenn., is a rural, economically depressed area in the foothills of the Upper Cumberland. Sixty percent of students receive free or reduced-price lunches, and nearly a third of the school's high school students drop out (only a third of the county's adults have graduated from high school).

The program was begun in 1987-88 with about \$41,000 — a \$20,500 grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission and the equivalent raised by local businesspeople and through services-in-kind from a local university, Tennessee Tech. Its goal: to increase students' desire to graduate from high school by improving study skills and higher-order thinking skills, increasing student involvement in school activities, making students aware of career opportunities and requirements, and increasing parents' awareness of the school's expectations for students and how they can help.

The project was developed for middle school students in part because district standardized test score data showed that student achievement begins to decline in the fifth and sixth grades and continues to decline through high school. Another factor is that extracurricular activities, which have been linked to retaining students, were limited; aside from basketball and football, there were few extracurricular activities, and students in the existing clubs got little recognition.

The project includes instruction in higher-order thinking skills one day a week for 20 weeks, for all fifth and sixth graders. Six student clubs and a band program have been started for grades 5-8. Students in grades 5-8 now go on two field trips a year and participate in a career education program that features talks by local citizens. Parents are encouraged to become involved: They attend parent education workshops on study skills and higher-order thinking skills, they receive a school newsletter, and they have access to videotapes which explain school programs.

An important facet of the program is local community involvement. Local government agencies, such as the Tennessee Department of Employment Security and Tennessee Tech, helped expand the school's academic and extracurricular programs. A number of small businesses donated cash pledges, two local service clubs donated the services of a certified public accountant, and the Jackson County Chamber of Commerce provided the career education program.

The results so far are extremely encouraging, says Principal Angela Smith. "Students' attitudes have changed. They're taking more interest in school programs." Parents and community members, she says, "are behind us incredibly" and everyone has developed a new sense of school spirit — T-shirts with "Foxy Spirit" emblazoned on them are a popular item.

Another leader: The school was selected by the state education commissioner for distinction as a "Basic Skills First" Exemplary School.

For information, contact: Angela Smith, Principal, Fox Middle School, 707 School Dr., Cambridge, Tenn. 38542; 615/268-9779.

PREVENTION, INTERVENTION, AND RECLAMATION PROGRAMS

Project BRIDGE and the School-to-Work Program Hartford, Connecticut, Public Schools

A joint venture with Hartford's School/Business Collaborative and the Chamber of Commerce, Project BRIDGE for students in grades 7-12 is the Hartford Public Schools' (K-12; enr: 26,000) major dropout prevention program.

Started in 1985 with 25 students, the program in 1988-89 has 130 students, all high-risk seventh graders with poor attendance or academic records, and all at least one grade behind their age group. "We have most kids between eighth and ninth grade," says Arlene Buford, assistant coordinator for the system's dropout program. "We're trying to catch these kids... and get them motivated by putting them in older classes, with their peers."

BRIDGE students attend special, smaller classes (student-teacher ratio of no more than 15:1) that accelerate the pace of learning. Students who meet program objectives are permitted to skip the eighth grade and go right on to ninth. Students who fall short are promoted to the eighth grade, where they remain in the program. The voluntary, intensified program (students also attend six weeks of summer school) offers counseling, job skills, and vocational training; students who keep up their grades may participate in paid internships. According to a contract parents must sign, parents agree to meet with teachers and get their child to school every day.

Twenty-five students from the first two years of the program have made it to tenth grade, and one class has been promoted to the eleventh grade. The start-up cost for the program was \$215,000, provided by the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation Public/Private Ventures, the federal government, and the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, a local philanthropic group. The program employs ten teachers and costs close to \$1 million to run. It is funded by the school system (\$457,000), the Chamber of Commerce (\$400,000), the city, and the Ford Foundation.

At the senior high level, 225 students in 1987-88 were enrolled in the School-to-Work program, a collaboration between the school system and the Hartford Chamber of Commerce that places low-

achieving juniors and seniors in internships with local businesses. Employment specialists employed by the program meet with students during their study halls to work on employment skills, career assessment, referral and placement into jobs.

In the four years the program has been in existence, 625 recent graduates have been placed in entry-level jobs and have earned over \$2 million. Fifty-three percent of students have been placed in jobs; 16 percent are in college; 7 percent in training programs; and 16 percent dropped out. The program, which costs \$175,000 in 1988-89, receives \$45,000 from the district, \$80,000 from the Chamber of Commerce, and the rest from the private sector.

For information, contact: Arlene Buford, Assistant Coordinator of Dropout Prevention, Hartford Board of Education, 249 High St., Hartford, Conn. 06103; 203/722-4713.

VCA's Crosswalk Employment Readiness Program Spokane School District #1 Spokane, Washington

In September 1986, the Spokane schools helped create the Crosswalk program in response to what school officials, teachers, and civic leaders perceived as a growing problem with street kids. Some 1,200 youths ages 14 to 18, mostly homeless or "homeless" — kicked out of their homes or repeatedly kicked out of school — participated in the program from July 1987 to July 1988. Forty percent of them dropped out of school before the eighth grade.

Sponsored by the Volunteers of America, the program is located downtown in a VOA building. The Spokane schools provide a teacher and equipment and program materials. The State Department of Social and Health Services and the Governor's Juvenile Justice Committee also lend assistance. Forty-one local churches run a meal program, and the Junior League runs a recreation program.

Crosswalk provides meals, health and counseling services, recreational activities, and overnight shelter in the winter in addition to individualized academic and job skills programs. Crosswalk's goal is to get the kids into an alternative program and then back into a regular high school. By the spring of the 1987-88 school year, at least 70 kids had "graduated" from the year-round program and had gone back to school, completed their GED, or had enrolled in the Air Corps. According to Marlene Reiff, program director, Crosswalk's philosophy is based on the fact that "food and shelter don't change kids' lives. School does."

For information, contact: Marlene Reiff, Program Director, VOA's Crosswalk Program, South 109 Jefferson, Spokane, Wash. 99204; 509/328-6106.

Futures

Baltimore City Public Schools

The Baltimore schools' Futures program began in 1984 as Project SAIL (Student Adventures in Learning), a collaboration among local, state, and federal officials to prevent dropout by linking summer school to jobs. The program is operated by the Baltimore schools and the Office of Employment Development, with support from the Job Training Partnership Act of the U.S. Department of Labor and private grants channeled through Baltimore's Fund for Education Excellence. The Neighborhood Progress Administration arranged part-time summer jobs for program participants.

In the 1988-89 school year, 750 at-risk eighth-graders making the transition from junior high to senior high are enrolled in Futures. Students are invited to participate in the voluntary program if they are identified as being at high risk of dropout because of underachievement and retention in grade.

Students attend an eight-week summer program: six weeks of a half-day of remedial classes (using computer-assisted instruction and peer tutors) and career/life planning and a half-day of work; then full-time work for two weeks. They also participate in a recreation program and a week-long Outward Bound wilderness trip which focuses on character development. During the school year, Futures students at the eight high schools involved in the program receive remedial help and counseling from a full-time project supervisor during an elective period. Some participants eventually become peer tutors.

In the summer of 1986, with the help of Project SAIL, 105 eighth-graders from low-income families who had been identified as being at risk of dropping out (or more than 90 percent of the project's participants) made secure transitions to high school. Evaluations of the project show substantial improvements in student achievement and in attitudes toward school and its relationship to successful employment. Students involved in the project in 1985, for example, showed gains in reading, mathematics, and language arts of up to seven months beyond their grade-level peers. Preliminary evaluation results from the first full year of the Futures program include better attendance, fewer dropouts, and fewer retentions in grade among students in the program, compared to students in control groups in the same high schools.

For information, contact: Carl Wheeler, Manager of At-Risk Programs, Office of Employment Development, 101 West 24th St., Baltimore, Md. 21218; 301/396-7510.

The Academies Program

Oakland, California, Public Schools

School officials in the Oakland Public Schools [K-12; enr.: 51,000] estimate that half the system's students are

at risk of school failure. Since 1985, the schools have introduced a number of at-risk programs, including a pilot program of "intervention" rooms schools where students can work one-to-one with a teacher or counselor.

Perhaps one of the most successful programs so far is the Academies Program. The Media Academy, the Business Academy, the Health Careers Academy, and the Computer Academy, located in four Oakland high schools, teach at-risk students skills they'll need to get jobs in those areas and put them in touch with local professionals who may serve as mentors. Students in the program attend academic and lab classes together in longer blocks of time than usual in the high school program, and consequently can develop closer relationships with classmates and teachers. Students apply to the program and are selected on the basis of attendance, grades, and test scores. Each student is appointed for three years.

The Media Academy, for example, enrolls between 100 and 150 students in grades 10-12. Students write for the school and community newspapers and are taught by professionals such as faculty from the journalism school at the University of California at Berkeley, an editor from the Oakland Tribune, and private advertisers. Students also get help finding summer writing and reporting jobs. And they have editorial space on a local cable television station.

The Health Academy provides lab courses and internships in health fields. Students, for example, may work as paid nursing assistants at a local hospital. In 1987-88, 48 of the 50 seniors in the Health Academy graduated from the program and from high school. One reason for success, says program manager Allie Gordon: Because the Academy programs have high expectations, and students are recruited, students perceive them as desirable and therefore are not "labeled" as at-risk.

For information, contact: Allie Gordon, Program Manager, Oakland Public Schools Academies, 1025 Second Ave., Oakland, Calif. 94610; 415/834-9680.

New Futures School

Albuquerque, New Mexico

Founded in 1970 as an alternative high school for pregnant teenagers and teenage parents, the New Futures School has provided services to more than 4,000 young people. The school is part of the Albuquerque Public Schools, but it also is cosponsored by a nonprofit community group, New Futures, Inc. In 1988-89, 280 students are enrolled — mostly expectant and new mothers, with a few teenage fathers. Students attend the school for several months to a year or more, depending on their needs and the recommendations of staff.

The school features a comprehensive program based on five key components: 1) academic courses toward a high school diploma (or for former dropouts over age 18, a graduation equivalency diploma) and "parenting"

education; 2) health services, provided by a clinic at the school, including general and prenatal care; 3) counseling and social services, including weekly group counseling sessions; 4) on-site child care, with work at the day care center an integral part of the curriculum; and 5) a jobs program in which students work a half-day for a private-sector employer (the school subsidizes part of each student's salary, the employer pays the rest).

The elements that make New Futures successful, says Principal Caroline Gaston, are its highly skilled staff, community involvement and support, its emphasis on building self-esteem in students, the comprehensive services, and on-site day care, which promotes good relationships between the teenage mothers and their babies.

A five-year follow-up study conducted in 1987 of students who attended the school showed that 73 percent had graduated from high school (an additional 4 percent were still in school) and more than half (54 percent) went on to post-secondary education programs. Ninety-seven percent of New Futures students in 1986-87 passed the state-mandated high school proficiency exam. Students' health and child-rearing practices also improved: They had comparatively fewer repeat pregnancies and fewer low-birth-weight babies, and more than half breastfed their babies.

For information, contact: Caroline Gaston, Principal-coordinator, New Futures School, 5400 Cutler Ave. N.E., Albuquerque, N.M. 87110; 505/883-5680.

**Student-Parent Resource Center
Owsley County Schools
Boonesville, Kentucky**

Owsley County is a small, rural county in tobacco

farm country of southeastern Kentucky. It's a poor area, and the Owsley County Schools [K-12; enr.: 1,047] — both of them — get just \$93 of local revenues for each student, compared to the state average of \$579. Parents' educational levels are low, and unemployment is high.

With limited revenues, school officials in 1985-86 applied for a grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission to start a Student-Parent Resource Center that would restructure curriculum to help students at risk of dropping out. In 1988-89, the second year of the program, 60 students in grades 7-9 are provided remedial education and support services, including tutoring, counseling, and vocational and on-the-job training. Student schedules include blocks of time instead of the usual class periods, and the center is open after school, on weekends, and in the summer.

Some features of the program: contract learning, individual education plans, self-evaluation strategies, and a low student-teacher ratio (1:15). Instructional assistants, volunteers, and peer tutors help teach in an informal atmosphere. In addition to language arts and mathematics, the program focuses on life skills, sex/family life education, career education, citizenship, and drug education.

What's unique about the center is that it doubles as an adult education center for the families of students. Parents, for example, may study basic academic subjects such as functional reading and mathematics, work on completing their GED, or take vocational classes.

For information, contact: Martha Turner, Supervisor-coordinator of Federal Programs, Owsley County Board of Education, P.O. Box 416, Boonesville, Ky. 41314; 606/593-6363. ■

APPENDIX 2

Programs in Leading States

Here are more in-depth descriptions of how selected states are trying to help at-risk children and youth:

Missouri

Missouri's place as a frontrunner in introducing innovative programs for children at risk of school failure has been clinched by its New Parents as Teachers Project. Some 380 families participated in the pilot project, begun in 1981 in four Missouri school districts — Farmington, Ferguson-Florissant, Francis Howell, and Independence. The New Parents as Teachers program was designed with the help of Burton White, author of *The First Three Years of Life*, and funded by the Danforth Foundation of St. Louis.

The families, all of whom were expecting their first child, participated in the parent training program from the third trimester of pregnancy until the children reached age three. Parents received child development information, periodic screening of the child's educational, hearing, and visual development, monthly home visits by parent educators, and participated in monthly group meetings at parent resource centers in the schools.

The New Parents as Teachers Project was so successful (for details, please refer to the chapter on research) that it was expanded to all 543 regular school districts. In the 1987-88 school year, some 53,000 families — nearly a third of all eligible families statewide — voluntarily participated in the \$11.5 million program.

The project became a cornerstone for the Early Childhood Development Act of 1985, which in addition to providing education for new parents, also provides physical and developmental screening for children ages one through four and parent education for parents of three- and four-year-olds. A component of the law will provide preschool programs for developmentally delayed children.

Massachusetts

The Bay State began helping at-risk children a decade ago, through state-funded programs for preschool children with special needs. The Public School Improvement Act of 1985 established an array of programs for at-risk youth, including basic skills remediation, dropout prevention, comprehensive health grants, parent education, and early childhood education programs.

Through the early education program, for example, the Massachusetts Department of Education provided \$10.3 million in 1987 for grants to schools in 128 communities. The 1985 law requires that 75 percent of state funds must go to schools in low-income areas, to

help disadvantaged children. The focus on early education includes the priority area, preschool programs for at-risk three- and four-year-olds, as well as transition programs between kindergarten and first grade, and enhanced kindergarten programs in which aides or additional teachers provide students more individual attention.

The law also requires that each school system establish an early childhood advisory council, including representatives from the public schools, private preschool providers, teachers, and parents and that schools work collaboratively with local resource agencies. Under the law, schools may contract out with other agencies, such as federally funded Head Start programs or other local agencies, to provide the programs for three- and four-year-olds. The state in 1987 provided an additional \$4.5 million for Head Start programs for at-risk three- and four-year-olds to help pay for higher salaries for Head Start teachers and extend services to an additional 400 students.

Indiana

Acting on the basis of research that indicated that student achievement levels rise when class size is decreased, Indiana in 1981 began a pilot program in nine school systems, reducing the student-teacher ratio to 14:1. The pilot program led to Indiana's PRIME TIME program, the cornerstone of education reform in the state and its largest funded education program. Legislation for at-risk children in 1988 will receive some \$20 million for programs in nine areas, including preschool and all-day kindergarten programs, transition to primary school programs, and parent involvement.

The PRIME TIME program was implemented statewide in phases, beginning with the first grade, in 1984. The \$65 million program is in place statewide; the average student-teacher ratio in kindergarten through grade three (kindergarten attendance is not compulsory) now is between 18:1 and 20:1. Under the program, school systems in 1988-89 receive \$22,500 for each teacher and \$7,500 for each classroom aide they hire to help reduce class size. Between 1984 and 1987, 2,613 additional teachers and 2,090 additional aides were hired statewide.

The results of the program so far are promising, says Kay Harmless, former PRIME TIME manager. "The kids who are showing the greatest gain are at-risk kids," she says. Because teachers can provide more individual attention, "a lot of kids who would have slipped through the cracks are being identified now," she says. Children who need more time in kindergarten, for

example, are more likely to be placed in transition programs. Children with handicaps or learning disabilities are channeled into appropriate programs earlier. Classroom discipline has improved generally, as has teacher morale, according to Harmless. "Teachers feel they now can teach. They're not doing crowd control. They can make a difference."

North Carolina

North Carolina's popular stay-in-school publicity program, including posters and television commercials featuring professional sports figures, is one facet of the state's efforts to cut its 28 percent dropout rate in half by 1993.

The Basic Education Program, part of the state's 1985 education reform legislation, requires school systems to identify high-risk students K-12, emphasizing grades K-3. State law requires school systems to design a plan for identifying at-risk kids and to create specific identification guidelines. The Basic Education Program requires schools, for example, to conduct preschool screening.

State promotion standards for grades three, six, and eight "zero in on at-risk kids," says Dennis O. Davis, director of support programs for the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. Students who score at or below the 25th percentile on standardized achievement tests are retained in grade. Low-achieving students have the option of attending a summer school program, from which they will be promoted to the next grade if their performance improves sufficiently. The measure, initially opposed by parent groups as a punitive measure, now is viewed as positive and "has strong support from parent groups," says Davis. The summer remediation program has been expanded for grades 1-11.

State guidelines define at-risk children generally as those 1) who are victimized by a variety of health, social, emotional, and economic factors that interfere with learning, school attendance, and satisfactory progress toward graduation; 2) who have learning or performance problems; 3) who are dropouts, or who are at risk of dropping out and whose lives are disrupted socially or emotionally; 4) who are not progressing toward literacy.

The state's Dropout Prevention Fund, established in 1985 with \$15 million, during the 1987-88 school year provided \$23 million for programs in five areas:

- 1) in-school suspension programs, required in every high school, in which certified teachers and counselors work with students in an alternative classroom
- 2) extended school day programs for youth age 16 to 21 in which dropouts or students who need alternative programs (such as working students) can earn a regular high school diploma

- 3) special school counselors for high-risk students
- 4) transition programs, including counseling, for students going from middle school to high school or from high school to work
- 5) additional programs for schools, such as those for teen mothers, single parents, substance abuse prevention, and abused or neglected children.

The state provides every school system funding for one full-time counselor, plus additional money based on the system's size, which can be used to hire social workers, teachers, counselors, psychologists, or other certified school professionals.

North Carolina legislators in 1987 passed additional legislation which requires school officials to devise individual referral plans for dropouts which provide options for seeking jobs or enrolling in alternative education programs.

Wisconsin

Wisconsin is generally regarded as the first state to have introduced a comprehensive identification and assistance campaign for at-risk children. A 1985 state law defines children at risk and requires every school board annually to identify at-risk children in the district and develop a plan for programs to meet their needs.

The state defines children at risk as those who are one or more years behind their age level group in mathematics or reading skill levels or in the number of credits attained, and who are or ever have been any of the following: a school dropout; absent from school for all or part of 20 days or more during the previous 175 school days without acceptable excuses; an adjudicated delinquent; or a parent.

School board plans must establish procedures for identifying children at risk and describe how their needs will be met through curriculum modifications and alternative programs, remedial instruction, parental involvement, pupil support services, community support service programs, education for employment programs, and other approaches.

School districts with 50 or more dropouts or a high school dropout rate exceeding 5 percent in the previous school year must have their plans approved by the state superintendent.

Those districts then must submit an annual report detailing attendance, retention, and high school graduation rates for students enrolled in the children-at-risk program and the percentage of them who received academic credit for the year.

Those districts required to seek approval for their plans may receive additional state funds if their annual reports show they've met at least three conditions among the following:

- the average attendance of students in the program was at least 70 percent

- the retention rate for students in the program was at least 70 percent
- at least 70 percent of the high school seniors in the program received a diploma
- at least 70 percent of the students enrolled earned sufficient credits to be promoted
- at-risk program students as a group improved at least one month in reading and mathematics performance for each month of instruction.

During the 1987-88 school year, 35 of the state's 431 independent school districts were required to provide plans and qualified to receive additional state aid. In

1987-88, \$1 million was shared by programs that serve some 7,000 students.

Wisconsin's approach to helping at-risk kids is unique, says Dennis H. Van Den Heuvel, consultant to the state's Children at Risk program, because "the school board becomes the resource manager." The legislation went beyond requiring boards to reorganize school programs to better serve at-risk students, he explains. It requires that boards also reach out to work with parents and community agencies (or, if necessary, to create organizations) specifically to help these students. ■

APPENDIX 3

Assessment Instrument to Determine District/Community Needs Relating to Children at Risk

District Name		Address	
Contact Person for Children at Risk Programs	Title	Telephone Area/No.	
Address of Contact Person <i>If different than district address</i>		District/School Code	

1. The following are programs and approaches used in meeting the educational, social, and career needs of children at risk. Please indicate whether the approach/program exists in your district/community. If it **EXISTS (Y)**, indicate the current and desired degree of emphasis. If it **DOES NOT EXIST (N)**, indicate only the desired degree of emphasis.

Item	Exists		Current Emphasis						Desired Emphasis					
	Y	N	Low	Circle One			High		Low	Circle One			High	
a. Remedial instruction (grades 4-12) in mathematics	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. Remedial instruction (grades 4-12) in reading	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
c. Modified instructional techniques emphasizing individual instruction.	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
d. Comprehensive vocational education programming	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
e. Comprehensive pupil services program(s) which co-ordinate(s) the efforts of school counselors, psychologists, social workers, nurses, and classroom teachers.	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
f. Systematic procedures for communication between school staff and parents.	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
g. Education programs for parents of children at risk.	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
h. Joint school/business partnership program(s) serving children at risk.	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
i. Planning and evaluation systems to ensure that educational progress/regression of children at risk is monitored and documented.	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
j. A districtwide developmental guidance program.	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
k. A home-call system to wake children and tell them it is time to go to school	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
l. A school/community sponsored pick-up-a-truant/absent pupil program.	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
m. A staff supervised in-school detention to make up work missed due to truancy.	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6

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Item	Exists		Current Emphasis						Desired Emphasis					
	Y	N	Low	Circle One			High		Low	Circle One			High	
OTHERS - SPECIFY														
n. _____	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
o. _____	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
p. _____	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6

2. The following is a partial listing of federal, state, and local programs used by schools, communities and businesses to serve children at risk (preschool - 12th grade). Please indicate whether or not each program exists in your district/community. If it **EXISTS (Y)**, indicate the current and desired degree of emphasis. If it **DOES NOT EXIST (N)**, indicate only the desired degree of emphasis.

Item	Exists		Current Emphasis						Desired Emphasis					
	Y	N	Low	Circle One			High		Low	Circle One			High	
a. Chapter 1 Basic Grants	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. Chapter 2 Program(s)	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
c. Four year old kindergarten	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
d. Job placement program(s)	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
e. Perkins Vocational Education Act Program(s)	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
f. Job Training Partnership Act Program(s)	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
g. Work Experience Program(s)	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
h. Youth Initiative Program(s)	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
i. School-Age Parent Program(s)	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
j. County 51 42/ 437 Board Program(s)	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
k. Positive Youth Development Program(s)	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
l. Community-based Career Education Program	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
m. Alcohol and Drug Abuse Program(s)	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
n. Headstart Program(s)	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
o. Bilingual Program(s)	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
p. Child Protective Behavior Program(s)	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
q. Sex/Race Equity Program(s)	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
r. Alternative High School	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
s. Suicide Prevention Program	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
t. Student Assistance Program(s) (SAPs)	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
u. Cooperative programs with community agencies	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
v. Cooperative programs with post-secondary institutions (Voc. Tech., and UW-Systems)	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Others - Specify														
w. _____	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
x. _____	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6

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3. The following are organizational and management factors relating to the educational, social, and career needs of children at risk. Please indicate whether or not each program exists in your district/community. If it **EXISTS (Y)**, indicate the **current and desired degree of emphasis**. If it **DOES NOT EXIST (N)**, indicate only the **desired degree of emphasis**.

Item	Exists		Current Emphasis						Desired Emphasis					
	Y	N	Low	Circle One				High	Low	Circle One				High
a. A school/community/business children at risk advisory committee to plan and to recommend programs for children at risk.	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. A school/community/business children at risk policy-making committee to develop and manage local programs for children at risk.	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
c. A pupil accounting system to monitor attendance and inform parents daily about trancies and absences.	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
d. A board approved district attendance policy.	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
e. Technical assistance from DPI in training school personnel, developing model programs, and providing materials and curricula.	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
f. State and federal grant(s) to your district to develop truancy and dropout prevention programs.	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
g. A designated school attendance officer in your district.	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
h. Local staff development programs to enable school staff to work more effectively with children at risk.	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
i. Systematic enforcement of school attendance policies.	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
j. Local law enforcement cooperation in dealing with truants and their parents.	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
k. Local media attention which supports school attendance policies.	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
l. A local Chamber of Commerce Education Committee.	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
m. Adequate health and social service programs to deal with the nonschool causes of children at risk.	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
n. Community education awareness programs to generate support for the importance of school attendance and achievement.	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
o. A districtwide curriculum planning committee.	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
p. School/Community sponsored programs for parents of children at risk.	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
q. A designated children at risk district leader responsible for coordinating children at risk programs.	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Others - Specify														
r. _____	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
s. _____	Y	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6

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4. **INHIBITING FACTORS:** Meeting the needs of children at risk is a complex and difficult task. Often school districts must overcome obstacles and inhibiting factors in accomplishing this task. Indicate to what degree the following obstacles and inhibiting factors limit your school's effectiveness in meeting the needs of children at risk.

Item	Low Degree	Circle One	High Degree
a. Insufficient assessment and evaluation tools for early and accurate identification of children at risk.	1	2	3 4 5 6
b. Ineffective truancy enforcement laws.	1	2	3 4 5 6
c. Ineffective prosecution of truants and parents.	1	2	3 4 5 6
d. Insufficient funding available to hire additional administrators, teachers and/or aides to work with children at risk.	1	2	3 4 5 6
e. Difficulties related to establishing school/family linkages.	1	2	3 4 5 6
f. Low teacher expectations of children at risk.	1	2	3 4 5 6
g. Low parental expectations of children at risk.	1	2	3 4 5 6
h. Unstable family situations among children at risk.	1	2	3 4 5 6
i. Lack of parental interest or support for school efforts regarding children at risk.	1	2	3 4 5 6
j. Lack of support from local law enforcement.	1	2	3 4 5 6
k. Lack of curriculum options for children at risk.	1	2	3 4 5 6
l. Inappropriate instructional techniques for children at risk considering their level of interest/ability.	1	2	3 4 5 6
m. Lack of systematic coordination among school/community/business/industry programs and resources.	1	2	3 4 5 6
n. Lack of cooperation with health and social services providers.	1	2	3 4 5 6
o. Teacher "burn-out" from working in children at risk.	1	2	3 4 5 6
Others - Specify	1	2	3 4 5 6
p. _____	1	2	3 4 5 6
q. _____			

APPENDIX 4

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ABOUT NSBA

The National School Boards Association is located in Alexandria, Virginia, within the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area. NSBA is a not-for-profit organization whose primary mission is the general advancement of public education through the unique North American system of representative and participatory government, whereby elementary and secondary school policy is decided by local school board members who are directly accountable to the community. Over 95% are elected, and the remainder are appointed by elected officials.

Federation Members of NSBA are the 49 state associations of local school boards, the Hawaii State Board of Education, and the boards of education in the District of Columbia and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

NSBA promotes the quality of public elementary and secondary schools through services to its Federation Members and local school boards; by increasing school board impact on federal education laws and regulations; and by maintaining liaison with other education organizations and governmental authorities.

In so doing, NSBA represents the interests of school boards before Congress, federal agencies and in court cases relating to education; provides education and training programs for school board members; provides school district management services; and offers to school boards a variety of other services including an annual convention and the Institute for the Transfer of Technology to Education (ITTE).

The NSBA Federal Relations Network, composed of up to three school board members in each Congressional district, plays a major role in NSBA's education advocacy program in Washington, D.C.

Three major publications are produced by NSBA: the award-winning monthly magazine, *The American School Board Journal*; the monthly magazine, *The Executive Educator*; and a fortnightly newspaper, *School Board News*.

Seven constituent groups within the Federation play a significant role in NSBA's efforts to serve Federation Member and school board needs:

- The Council of Urban Boards of Education focuses on the unique needs of urban school boards.
- The Large District Forum serves the special needs of large but non-urban school districts.
- The Rural District Forum serves rural and small enrollment districts.
- The Federation Member Executive Directors' NSBA Liaison Committee links the top executives within the Federation.
- The Council of School Attorneys focuses on issues of school law.
- The Conference of School Boards Association Communicators serves NSBA and Federation Member communications professionals.
- The Federal Policy Coordinators Network focuses on the administration of federally funded programs.

NSBA maintains close liaison with other groups, such as the National Caucus of Black School Board Members, National Caucus of Hispanic School Board Members, National Caucus of Young School Board Members, National Association of State Boards of Education, American Association of School Administrators, Forum of Education Organization Leaders (FEO), Education Leaders Consortium (ELC), National Governors' Association, National Conference of State Legislatures, and Education Commission of the States.

Founded in 1940, NSBA represents the nation's 97,000 school board members who, in turn, represent the more than 40 million public school children in the U.S., which account for about 90% of all elementary and secondary school students in the nation. Over 1,800 local school boards are NSBA Direct Affiliates.

NSBA policy is determined by a 150-member Delegate Assembly composed of active school board members across the country. Translating this policy into action programs is a Board of Directors consisting of 21 members and three ex-officio members. The executive director administers NSBA programs, assisted by a professional staff.





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